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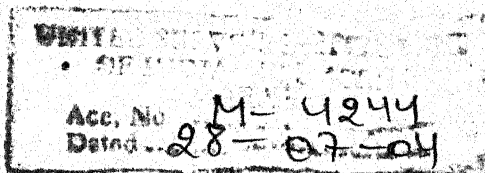
A MILITARY STORY OF THE
PERIOD OF THE SEPOY MUTINY

By "ARTAX"

338

"Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears ;
I come to bury Cæsar, not to praise him.
The evil that men do lives after them ;
The good is oft interred with their bones."

Julius Cæsar.



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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. DWYRE FLARES UP	I
II. JARDIGNE'S RECALL	II
III. THE OUTBREAK	19
IV. THE PURBIAHS AND KOLARIS	28
V. THE AG : A DIFFICULT CLIMB	39
VI. AN INTRIGUING PARLEY	53
VII. THE DACOIT POLICE	60
VIII. THE FIRST RAID	81
IX. JAYLE MAKES FOR HADWANI	101
X. THE SETTLEMENT	126
XI. THE BITER BIT	146
XII. MEERUT—AND THE MUTINY	159
XIII. THE COLONEL'S SON—AND MAJOR VAUGHAN	183
XIV. THE LAST RAID	199
XV. COLONEL JAYLE'S DECISION	218
XVI. THE SITAPANI MASSACRE	243
XVII. JAYLE REVERSES HIS DECISION	255
XVIII. A FOOL IN HIS FOLLY	277
XIX. DESERTION	300
XX. COWARDICE	322
XXI. NEMESIS	337

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CHAPTER I

DWYRE FLARES UP

CLAUDE FRANCIS JAYLE belonged to a class which, whatever its value in the past, had outlived its utility. He was a soldier of fortune, an adventurer. Though India undoubtedly owes a great deal of her present prosperity to these European adventurers, she had in the early fifties of the nineteenth century reached a position, thanks to the East India Company, that held no place for the soldier of fortune. And so the whole class of them, good, bad and indifferent, came to be regarded as a nuisance.

Jayle had started life in the Army, but after a short and chequered career he left the service and drifted out to India soon after the Battle of Waterloo. For some time he found favour at the Court of Ranjit Singh, the Sikh King of Lahore. But after a quarrel there with another adventurer he had to flee from Lahore, and escaped into Kolaristan in about the year 1830.

Kolaristan lies to the north of the Punjab, and is a rugged mass of hills, for the most part densely wooded and difficult of approach, and is inhabited by a race as rugged, treacherous and difficult as their country.

The Kolaris claim to be descended from the

remnants of the Rohillas who, under Ali Mahomed Khan, invaded Kumaon in 1743. They trace their ancestry to those Rohillas who had taken to themselves wives from the hill tribes. When Ali Mahomed Khan left Kumaon these hillmen, finding that their wives refused to go down to the plains, migrated west into Kolaristan. Whether this was their true origin, or whether they were a hill tribe converted, forcibly or otherwise, to Islam, is open to question. In feature they are typical hillmen, and in religion claim to be Mahomedans, but they are not particularly orthodox.

So Jayle came to settle in Kolaristan; and here he came under the notice of John Company. In ways that do not affect this story, but were probably no better and no worse than the methods common to other adventurers of that time, he attained a certain degree of influence among the wild inhabitants of Kolaristan. Here John Company's influence was not yet known, except in so far as his more civilised and law-abiding subjects were an easy source of profit to the Kolari raiders.

These raids at last became so frequent and audacious that John Company, doubtless thinking that Jayle had a good deal to do with them, approached him; and Jayle invented the subsidy. Not that he called it by that name. He merely put forward the proposal that he should raise a regiment of these same Kolaris, which should be equipped and paid by John Company.

In 1855, the new regiment was raised and composed half of Kolaris and half of John Company's

own Purbiahs. Jayle commanded the regiment, but the other officers, four in number, were regular officers of John Company's service. So, in 1855, Jayle became, at the age of sixty, a servant of John Company, with the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel; and the 100th Bengal Infantry was raised at Barachina.

Barachina is situated on a small plain some ten miles in diameter, surrounded by densely wooded hills, the fastnesses of numerous large and small bands of dacoits, as the local banditti are called. At its south-east corner this plain is connected by a steep winding defile about four miles long with the Indian plain, which is the only practicable communication between Kolaristan and the Indian plain; and even this was, at the time of our story, only practicable for lightly loaded pack transport.

The cantonment was of course a new one, and but one regiment, the 100th, was stationed there. There was no civil population and, though the officers of the regiment who were known to the people were not as a rule molested, the country was still unmapped, and the inhabitants were so wild and treacherous that any stranger coming to or from Barachina had to have a strong escort from the regiment.

Colonel Jayle having once accepted the Company's service was loyal, and the Company had no reason to repent of their bargain as far as stopping the raiding was concerned; and, by the beginning of 1857, the dacoities had gradually diminished and in the end practically ceased altogether.

4 THE EVIL THAT MEN DO

When the regiment was first raised, the four Purbiah companies were composed of picked men from various regiments, attracted by the period of two years' engagement at double pay, and thoroughly trained and efficient, whereas the Kolari companies were of course, from a military point of view, wholly untrained.

Colonel Jayle introduced a somewhat unorthodox system of promotion and reduction in the Kolari companies, according as a man's relatives and friends abstained from or took part in raids. As promotion or reduction meant a corresponding increase or decrease of pay, those who took part in raids indirectly lost rather than gained by doing so. By these unusual means John Company attained the object for which the regiment was originally raised—the cessation of raiding.

The effect of the Commandant's somewhat peculiar and original system of promotion on the discipline and efficiency of the Kolari companies was not so unsatisfactory as might have been expected. In fact, it was probably the best he could have devised.

The result was that those men who had sufficient influence first to persuade their relatives and friends to abstain from raiding were the men who were first promoted; so that, two years after the raising of the regiment, the native and senior non-commissioned officers of the Kolari companies were the most influential of their class in the regiment, either from their social standing, if such a thing can be said to have existed among the Kolaris, or from their personal strength of character; and the

Kolari companies had reached a high state of military efficiency.

The original Purbiahs, on the other hand, who when the regiment was first raised had come in on a two years' engagement, had, except in the case of most of the native officers, been replaced by others. These did not approach the original Purbiah companies in either efficiency or reliability.

Each class looked down on and hated the other in the same way, and for much the same reasons, that the Scottish Highlanders and Lowland English hated and despised one another in the early Middle Ages.

The Kolaris looked down on the Purbiahs as effeminate weaklings whom they and their forefathers had always raided with advantage and impunity; while the Purbiahs regarded the Kolaris as uncouth, uncultured savages without a hope of ever attaining the military discipline and efficiency bred in themselves through generations of professional soldiers. This feeling unfortunately extended to some extent to the two British officers most concerned: Captain Dwyre, who commanded the Purbiah wing, and Lieutenant Jardigne, in command of the Kolaris.

Dwyre was considerably older than Jardigne and his military career had been a chequered one. He was by no means a bad soldier, but easy-going, of a phlegmatic temperament and with an optimistic tendency to suppose that everything would come out all right in the end, if only it were left alone to do so. He had had the misfortune of serving under a succession of Commandants who despised and

ignored him, and, at the age of thirty-three, had eagerly seized on the chance of fresh opportunities and surroundings offered by transfer to the newly-raised regiment.

Jardigne was just twenty years of age, keen and full of energy, a good horseman and sportsman in the best sense of the word, but wanting an experienced guide to turn his energies in the right direction. Self-reliant, self-sufficient, appallingly self-opinionated, he had but little opportunity of developing naturally the good qualities of his character in the surroundings of Barachina and though Dwyre was much too easy-going to be led into an actual quarrel, it was obvious that each could only be a constant jar to the other's nerves and susceptibilities.

Dwyre and Jardinge were sitting in the mess, which then corresponded to what would now be the club, discussing the news that had just arrived of the outbreak at Meerut.

"I really don't see how it can possibly affect us here," Dwyre said. "It is probably purely local. Hulloo! Is that your pony? You're not going out yet, surely?"

"Oh, yes I am," answered Jardinge. "I'm going after what you call one of my tame panthers. Fazl Ali insists on my being in the *machan** by six o'clock this afternoon, and sitting up all night."

"Your orderly?" Dwyre paused for a moment, then went on: "Don't you think it would be as well to stay in for a bit after this piece of news?"

*A platform in a tree, on which the sportsman sits at night.

I don't think myself that it will spread to Kolaristan, but you never know. The Kolaris claim to be Rohillas, and I expect, when everything is known, it will be found that the Rohillas are at the bottom of this mutiny. I don't believe the Purbiahs will mutiny."

"I have equal faith in my Kolaris," returned Jardigne, annoyed at the imputation that his men were less loyal than the Purbiahs.

"You can hold your own opinion," continued Dwyre phlegmatically, "but you must allow me to hold mine, and I have got more experience of India to base mine on than you have. You're an obstinate chap, Jardigne, but I respect your faith in your own Kolaris. I don't for a moment suggest that a Kolari mutiny is probable; but it is possible. I gather that this mutiny has been allowed to spread largely because the British officers of each regiment were quite convinced that, whatever any other regiment might do, their own would remain loyal."

Jardigne suppressed his growing indignation with an effort. "Yes," he replied, "the British officer does seem to have had rather a pathetic belief in the loyalty of the Purbiah."

"Good Lord!" said Dwyre, even his phlegmatic temper rising. "You don't suppose the Purbiahs would mutiny, do you?"

"Why not?"

"Why on earth should they?"

"For the same reasons that their brothers and cousins did at Meerut, whatever those may have been. Why, there are men transferred from the tenth in the regiment now."

"You don't know the Purbiah——"

"I know quite as much about the Purbiah as I want to," interrupted Jardigne hotly.

There was a pause while Dwyre looked for a moment steadily at Jardigne. For the first time he was now really angry. "You're an obstinate young puppy, so full of your own opinion that you cannot realise that the Purbiah has a good deal more common sense and care of his own skin and interests than you have. Anyone with a grain of common sense would see that the Purbiah in Barachina is not going to mutiny just for the pleasure of having his throat cut by the delightful people of the country in which he is exiled. I hope that is clear even to your intelligence."

Jardigne had never seen Dwyre angry before. He did see now, however, that the man who gets angry once in two years, and then gets angry quietly, must not be pushed too far. He felt the impossibility of further argument while Dwyre was in this mood. Without attempting to reply he walked out of the room, mounted his pony and rode away.

Dwyre half rose out of his chair as if to follow him, but his phlegmatic temperament reasserted itself, and, as the doctor (Clarke) came into the ante-room, he sank back into his chair again.

"That young idiot, or his pony, will die of apoplexy before he is much older," said Clarke, sitting down, "getting on to his pony at this time of the day and galloping off as if the Devil was after him. Where's he off to? Nothing's happened, has it?"

"He's going out after a panther, I believe."

"Now? He knows the news, I suppose? The Colonel has just told me."

"About Meerut? Oh yes! But I don't think anything is likely to happen here. I've just been discussing it with that young puppy, and I want to talk to a reasonable being."

"Sorry, I can't stop. But what does Jardigne mean by going after a panther if he thinks anything is likely to happen?"

"Oh, he's quite convinced that nothing can happen."

"I gathered from what you said," returned Clarke with a smile, "that he had disagreed with you. Or do you want the reasonable being to disagree with you?"

Dwyre smiled grimly. "Oh no! We agreed perfectly in the usual disagreeable way we always do," he replied, rather bitterly. When Jardigne was not there to jar on his nerves, he did not dislike the boy, realising that his failings were due to his surroundings and would probably disappear as he grew older and his natural good qualities had a chance to assert themselves.

Clarke scented a little mild amusement, a thing which is always worth finding at the end of May, but he rose again, as if in haste to go. "You're getting argumentative in your old age," he said. "Too much curry. Let's have a look at your tongue."

"No, sit down. Never mind looking at it, listen to it. What are you in such an infernal hurry about?"

"I've got to operate on Gopal Singh this afternoon."

"Tej Singh's young brother?" asked Dwyre with a look of considerable surprise and interest. "Why, only the day before yesterday you told me you thought he was malingering."

"Well, he isn't. He's pretty bad," and with that Clarke hurried out.

Dwyre sat on in the ante-room for a while, and, about half an hour afterwards, his horse having been brought round, rode slowly away.

CHAPTER II

JARDIGNE'S RECALL

AT the same time that Dwyre and Jardigne were, as Dwyre put it, agreeing so disagreeably Colonel Jayle was discussing the same news with Banton, the Adjutant, and they, too, came to the conclusion that there was no immediate danger. The ill-feeling between the two sections of the regiment had its advantages. The Purbiahs and Kolaris certainly would not combine in a mutiny, and if either section showed any intention of rising the other would in all probability find out and give information.

They had reached this conclusion when a servant came in to announce that Subedar Tej Singh was waiting outside, and Colonel Jayle told him to ask the Subedar Sahib to come in. Subedar Tej Singh was the senior native officer of the Purbiah wing. When the regiment was first formed he had come to it from the 10th, which, it will be remembered, was the first regiment to mutiny at Meerut. The news of the mutiny had not, however, affected Colonel Jayle's absolute confidence in the old Subedar's loyalty. He had left the 10th nearly three years before and what had happened since in that regiment could hardly affect him.

Subedar Tej Singh entered the room and closed

the door quietly. When offered a chair he refused.

"I cannot sit in the Presence," he said in a broken voice, with tears in his old grey eyes. "My face is black with shame. It is said in the lines that my old regiment has mutinied and killed all the *Sahib-log** in Meerut. Is not this a lie, sahib?"

Colonel Jayle paused before replying. The old Subedar was so obviously honestly upset at the news that, both to soothe his feelings and to prevent what might give rise to a panic in the lines if the bare facts, as he knew them, were published generally, he decided on a little intelligent anticipation of events.

"Some *badmashes*† in your old regiment mutinied, Subedar Sahib," he replied. "They killed two British officers before the remainder of the regiment intervened and saved the other British officers, killing some of the rebels and arresting the others. These will be shot and the name of your old regiment will not now be blackened."

"It is well, sahib," Tej Singh said, "and again it is not well. As the sahib knows, a kitten becomes a tiger in the mouths of many men.‡ I go to the lines to make known the sahib's words." He paused for a moment and then went on: "It is said, sahib, that the Kolaris will all desert to-night. They say that the Honourable Company's *raj* § is

* Europeans.

† Scoundrels.

‡ Hindustani proverb: "Bahut bat se billi bagh banaya jata" (Rumour exaggerates itself).

§ Rule, Regime.

finished, and that they will again live at ease in plenty on the fruits of their neighbours as Kolaris and not as Purbiahs. As the Adjutant Sahib knows all the guards this week are Kolaris. When they desert they will take with them not only their own but the Purbiahs' muskets also. There is but one small Purbiah guard over the muskets. If the sahib orders it the guards shall be changed and Purbiah guards posted instead."

Colonel Jayle paused again before making any reply. The Subedar's proposal was out of the question as it stood; it would at once produce a panic in the Kolari lines. But that something had to be done to allay the suspicions of the Purbiahs was equally obvious.

"No, Subedar Sahib," he said at last. "That cannot be done now. But do this. Choose twenty Purbiahs as a guard and let them wait at your quarters; but do not let them draw their arms until the Adjutant Sahib comes. He will give the orders."

"It is already done," replied the old Subedar, which was his polite way of saying that it would be done at once.

"Fortunately, to-morrow is the first of the month," Jayle said to Banton when Tej Singh had gone. "You had better go down to the lines and get the pay from the treasure chest. Put it in the office and put this Purbiah guard over it. You can say that it will be paid out early to-morrow. It will save time having it in the office ready. This may also prevent the Kolaris deserting to-night if they think they are going to get their pay to-

morrow. The great thing is to avoid doing anything that may lead to suspicion and a sudden panic or outbreak; so be careful to be as natural about it as you can. The only thing we can do is to avoid any chance of panic or an outbreak until we hear more definite news from Meerut.

"If, as I expect," he went on, "we hear that the mutiny has been suppressed, as quickly as it broke out, then everything will be all right. But it is a nuisance that the news should have got into the lines, especially since, as Tej Singh says, the very wildest exaggerations and rumours are probably by now rampant in the Kolari lines. Once let them imagine that the source of their pay is cut off, they will naturally return pretty quickly to their hereditary trade. Dacoity is the only means known to them of obtaining a livelihood. To-morrow, I think, I will let them have the yarn I told Tej Singh. That ought to keep things quiet for a day or two. However, go on and put this guard on the office. If you see Dwyre or Jardigne you might ask them to come here."

As Banton was going towards the lines he met Dwyre just leaving the mess compound, gave him the Colonel's message and went on down to the Purbiah lines.

Colonel Jayle had just finished telling Dwyre what Tej Singh had said and was explaining his views when the servant again came in and said Subedar Niaz Mahomed was outside. While the servant went to ask the Subedar to come in Colonel Jayle turned to Dwyre.

"It is just as I thought," he said. "Each

section of the regiment is in a state of panic, and convinced the other lot is going to mutiny. Now we shall hear all about what your Purbiahs are going to do."

Subedar Niaz Mahomed, the senior Kolari native officer, entered and hesitated for a moment at the door on seeing Dwyre. Then, recovering himself almost at once, he saluted and sat down in the proffered chair. In stature he was short, even for a Kolari, but extremely powerfully built. He had been a personal friend of Jayle's in former times, before the regiment was raised, and a cunning and successful leader of a large band of dacoits, whom he had persuaded to join the regiment *en bloc*. His countenance showed a mixture of cunning and cruelty, but his eyes showed that he possessed a sense of humour practically unique amongst Kolaris and seldom met with amongst Indians of any class. As was natural in one of his tribe, he was brusque, almost rude, without the natural polish of Tej Singh, and he showed his dislike for Dwyre in a way that no polished Indian could possibly have done. But when he spoke his voice was a striking contrast to his appearance. Deep, almost with a lisp, like the purr of a great cat, it could not but inspire the listener with a sense of the man's honesty and strength of character, increased, as it were by contrast, by the doubt and suspicion produced at first sight by his outward appearance.

"What I wish to report," said Niaz Mahomed, speaking in the Kolari dialect and glancing in Dwyre's direction, "is for Your Honour's own ear."

"Go on, Subedar Sahib," said the Colonel impatiently. "If it is anything important, never mind Kaptan Dwyre Sahib. I am an old man and if anything happened to me Dwyre Sahib would be Colonel."

"It is said," said Niaz Mahomed slowly, "that the 10th Regiment has mutinied at Meerut and killed all the British officers there; and at Delhi and everywhere the *Sahib-log* are all dead. There are now in the Purbiah lines eight sepoys of the 10th Regiment who have just come up from Meerut."

The Colonel glanced quickly at Dwyre. The conversation had been carried on by the wily Niaz Mahomed in the Kolari dialect, which Dwyre could not follow, but which Jayle of course talked like a native. Niaz Mahomed, however, spoke the last sentence in pure Hindustani. If it was the Subedar's intention to catch the Colonel or Dwyre off his guard, the sudden change of language was a dramatic inspiration; but Dwyre was not in the least perturbed by the news.

"I knew that," he said to the Colonel. "They came a week ago. Men often come like that on leave from various regiments to see their friends and relations up here. I'm sorry, I ought to have told you before; but I thought nothing of it at the time and forgot all about it until the Subedar just now mentioned it."

"Very well, Subedar Sahib," said the Colonel, "I will see about it. You were quite right to come and inform me, but the latest news from Meerut is that the mutiny has been suppressed. It was only

a small affair of part of the 10th Regiment and it was suppressed by the remainder of the same regiment. It is said that two British officers were killed before it was suppressed, but the whole thing is over now."

Niaz Mahomed looked relieved and shortly afterwards went back to the lines.

"This means that the news has been known in the lines for a week," said the Colonel.

"I don't think so, sir," said Dwyre. "These men as a rule go to their homes for a bit before coming up here, in order to have all the home news to tell to their friends here. They probably left Meerut before the mutiny broke out. Anyhow, I think one can trust old Tej Singh, and these men are staying with him. It is not as if they had made the least secrecy about it. Tej Singh told me all about their having come from his old regiment himself."

"I hope that is so," said the Colonel, rather doubtfully; "but it is exactly as I said to Banton. There is a state of mutual suspicion and distrust between the Purbiahs and Kolaris which the most trivial event might fan into the most appalling outbreak at any moment. The only thing we can do is to be very careful not to excite the suspicions of either class. Provided nothing happens in the next day or two, I think common sense will reassert itself, but the tension is so great that an accident might lead to anything. Do you know if Jardigne has gone out yet?"

"Yes. He went out about an hour ago. I've got my pony here and can ride after him if you

like ; he has only gone to the pass about six miles from here. I was going for a ride in any case and I might just as well go there and give him your message as anywhere else."

"Yes," said the Colonel after a pause. "I really think it would be as well. I rather encourage him to go about the country. He undoubtedly has a good deal of influence with the Kolaris. He knows all their brothers and cousins and such, and is, I believe, really popular with the men. But I think on this occasion he would be better here than out in the jungle. He can go out after his panther a little later on, when things have settled down again a bit."

Dwyre went out, mounted his pony and rode off after Jardigne.

CHAPTER III

THE OUTBREAK

WHEN Banton had given Dwyre the Colonel's message, he went on to Subedar Tej Singh's quarters. On arrival there he saw no sign of the native officer, and, calling him by name, got no reply. Instead of the Subedar, a young Havildar came round the corner of the hut and, in reply to Banton's question asking where Tej Singh was, said that he had gone to the hospital as his brother was very ill.

Banton was considerably surprised to hear this after having seen Tej Singh at the Colonel's bungalow not a quarter of an hour before. He had not the same reasons as the Colonel for confidence in Tej Singh's loyalty and it was a fact notorious throughout the regiment, and often openly discussed by Clarke in the mess, that this brother of Tej Singh's, Gopal Singh, was a malingerer and a waster generally. Unfortunately Banton had not sufficient control over his face and voice to hide his suspicion.

"But Subedar Tej Singh was in the Colonel Sahib's bungalow not a quarter of an hour ago," he said, "and he said nothing then about his brother being ill. The Colonel Sahib said Subedar Tej Singh was to wait here until I came down to

the lines. The Subedar knows there is very important work to do."

"Yes, sahib," answered the Havildar. "The Subedar Sahib, when he came back from the Colonel Sahib's bungalow, called me and told me to collect twenty sepoy and bring them to his quarters at once. I did so and the Subedar Sahib was just going to tell me what the orders were when an orderly came to him from the hospital and said that the Doctor Sahib had himself sent him down to tell Subedar Tej Singh that his brother Gopal Singh was very ill. So the Subedar Sahib went off at once to the hospital without giving me the orders, but he told me to wait here until Your Honour came, and he said that you would give the orders." The Havildar paused a moment, but as Banton made no reply and did not seem in any hurry to give his orders, he went on: "The Subedar Sahib has only just this very moment gone to the hospital. If the sahib orders it a man shall go to fetch him back."

Banton thought for a moment before replying. He, of course, knew nothing of Clarke's sudden decision to operate on Gopal Singh, whose illness and imminent death was such a chronic cry of "wolf," and his scepticism was perhaps excusable.

"Yes," he said at last. "Give my salaams to the Subedar Sahib and ask him to come to the quarter guard. Fall the rest of the party in and march them there."

Banton himself went on ahead in order that the approach of the Purbiah party might not come as a surprise to the Kolari Havildar in charge of the

quarter guard, which, in the state of excitement and mutual suspicion then existing, might easily have brought about a catastrophe. He took the keys of the treasure chest and casually mentioned to the Havildar in the hearing of all the guard that he was going to pay out the men early the following morning, and was going to put the money in the office over-night to save time. So, when the Purbiah party under Havildar Mayan Singh arrived to take the money, no particular notice was taken by the Kolaris and no suspicion was aroused.

Banton had just commenced to count out the money when Subedar Tej Singh came up to him accompanied by a hospital orderly, who happened to be a Kolari. As soon as Banton saw the Kolari, he realised at once that his suspicions must be unfounded. It was obvious that no dangerous plot could result from the collaboration of a Purbiah Subedar and a Kolari hospital orderly. He was genuinely sorry to have brought the old man back and, hardly waiting for his explanation, sent him again to the hospital and continued counting out the money. When he had finished this it was getting dusk.

He took the party off to draw their muskets and then took the money to the office. He had a box with a padlock brought out, posted two sentries on it, placed the money in the box and was just locking it, when suddenly the sound of a shot rang out. He half rose, and as he looked up in surprise in the direction from which the sound came the sentry, who was standing behind him, bayoneted him between the shoulder-blades and, as the muzzle

13-191

of his musket touched Banton's back, pressed the trigger.

But Banton never knew that. He was dead.

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Colonel Jayle was sitting in his room, where Dwyre had left him to ride out and recall Jardigne, when the sounds of two shots rang out in quick succession, followed almost at once by a fierce general fusilade from the direction of the lines.

Almost immediately the door burst open, and his orderly, a young Kolari, rushed into the room. The Colonel had his pistol handy and, as his orderly rushed at him, aimed and pressed the trigger. But there was no answering report; the charge had been drawn. As the orderly rushed at him, Jayle thrust the muzzle of the pistol into the man's face and sent half his teeth down his throat. The Kolari had rushed at him with arms raised to guard his head, expecting the other to use the butt of the pistol. This unexpected blow for a moment staggered him—but only for a moment. Before Jayle could again use his pistol the orderly closed with him and wrenched the pistol from his hand, spraining the old man's wrist in doing so.

There was a short, desperate struggle, but the Colonel was handicapped by his sprained wrist. In less than a minute he was lying, gasping and helpless, under his powerful opponent; there was a rush of feet outside and half a dozen more Kolaris came in in a mob and fell on the struggling pair. The Colonel was soon bound hand and foot, gagged, blind-folded and, wrapped up in a sheet, was carried

like a corpse on a *charpoy* * out into the open. Mingled with the sound of firing, he now heard the crackle of flames and the crash of falling buildings. As he felt himself being borne swiftly away by his captors these sounds were gradually left behind.

He soon perceived from the movements around him that the numbers of his escort had increased, but not a word was spoken by anybody. His wrist, bound as he was, was causing him considerable pain, but this was nothing compared to his mental agony. He cursed himself for a child for not having seen to the charge in his pistol. Somehow he had never anticipated any actual danger to himself.

Jayle was still convinced that the Purbiahs had remained loyal. Over and above the extreme unlikelihood of Purbiahs and Kolaris joining hands in such an enterprise, the heavy fighting he had heard going on in the lines was, to him, ample proof of this. His great fear was that Banton, finding him missing, might presume he had been killed and press the Kolaris so hard as to induce his own murder.

However, he could hear no sound of pursuit, and this to some extent reassured him. Given time, he thought his quick wit would procure at least his safety, if not his freedom. He had lived for over thirty years amongst these people and had been in as bad predicaments before and had managed to come through with a whole, not to say a hardened, skin.

* Native wooden bed.

While these thoughts were passing through his mind, he heard the voice of Niaz Mahomed beside him.

"If Your Honour will promise to come with us, the ropes shall be untied."

Jayle mumbled into his gag and he was lowered, and the stifling sheet, the bandage over his eyes and the gag were removed.

"If Your Honour will promise to come with us, the ropes shall be untied," repeated Niaz Mahomed.

"My Honour has no option," answered Jayle. "I will come with you."

The ropes were untied and Jayle rose stiffly to his feet and looked around him. He found himself at the edge of the hills at the north-western corner of the Barachina plain. The night was clear, though there was no moon, and in the centre of the plain Barachina was still burning cheerfully. Beyond that, through the smoke, he caught glimpses of the outline of the hills above the pass, and thought with gratitude that Jardigne and Dwyre were at any rate comparatively safe. The Kolaris had not carried him off in that direction and the other British officers would doubtless have heard the firing and joined the remnants of the Purbiahs. It seemed that the Purbiahs must have been pretty roughly handled, as there did not appear to be any pursuit, for which Jayle was selfishly thankful; though, apparently, they had not been able to prevent the Kolaris setting fire to the station before taking to the hills.

Niaz Mahomed interrupted his reverie. "It is

necessary to proceed," he said. "I hope the sahib is not hurt?"

"No. Only my wrist pains me. I can walk."

The party continued a short distance into the hills until they came to a small mountain stream, nearly dry at that season. Here Niaz Mahomed called a halt and, tearing the sheet in which Jayle had been nearly smothered into strips, dipped them into the water and began himself carefully and skilfully to bind up Jayle's wrist. The thought then suddenly struck Jayle that, considering Niaz Mahomed's reputation for cruelty, he was showing an unusual solicitude for the comfort of a prisoner. He looked sharply at the face of the captor who was so carefully bandaging his prisoner's injured wrist to see if he could see there the answer to the riddle. Niaz Mahomed noticed the other's questioning look and the change in his attitude and smiled.

"The sahib now understands," he said.

"Indeed, I do not," said Jayle.

Niaz Mahomed beckoned to a Havildar standing near.

"I was in command of the quarter guard this evening," said the Havildar, in a slow, monotonous voice, as if he were giving evidence at a court-martial. "The Adjutant Sahib came and took money from the treasure chest. Soon I heard a shot. I went with the guard towards the office where the shot was fired. The Purbiah sepoys began to fire at me and I fired back. The Adjutant Sahib's body was lying in the verandah of the office and he did not move. I think he was dead. When

all the Kolaris had got their muskets the Subedar Sahib set fire to the lines, and under cover of this we retired to the hills, bringing Your Honour along with us. Many Purbiahs were killed. Now we shall live as Kolaris and the last two years are forgotten. See, sahib, the cantonment is already burnt and the flames are dying for want of fuel."

Jayle now realised what had happened. The Purbiahs had mutinied and Niaz Mahomed and the Kolaris had taken advantage of the mutiny to serve their own ends and revert to their natural and national existence as dacoits. They had taken him along with them presuming, no doubt, that he would not be averse to resuming his former and in their view, more natural existence. Perhaps they were right; but Jayle could not at once reconcile himself to what seemed to be the avoidable desertion and sacrifice of the other British officers. He turned to Niaz Mahomed.

"You knew that this was going to happen," he said. "You should have told me."

"Sahib, I did."

"The Adjutant Sahib would not have been killed."

Niaz Mahomed looked at him in apparent surprise. A European would have shrugged his shoulders.

"Many Purbiahs would not have been killed," he remarked.

"But where is that idiot of an orderly?" he said. "That performance was surely an unnecessary piece of cheap melodrama. I might have

killed him and, in any case, it was unnecessary for him to half kill me."

"I did not know exactly when the Purbiahs would mutiny," answered Niaz Mahomed, "and so could not make more definite arrangements. I therefore gave orders to Your Honour's orderly that, when the Purbiahs did mutiny, he was to prevent you, as best he could, from going down to the lines. Assistance would be sent to him as soon as possible."

"Subedar Sahib," said Jayle significantly after a pause, his wrist being now comfortably bandaged, "Jardigne Sahib is at the pass." He made no mention of Dwyre.

"Yes, sahib. It was by my orders his orderly took him there. Here you proceed with Havildar Salah Mahomed," continued Niaz Mahomed. "I go to the pass. The Purbiahs to-night will loot the cantonment. They think that we Kolaris have fled to the hills to the north and they do not know that Jardigne Sahib is at the pass. To-morrow all the Purbiahs that remain will die at the pass."

Niaz Mahomed went off to Utra, his own village, with the greater part of the Kolaris, leaving Jayle and Salah Mahomed, the Havildar who had been in command of the quarter guard, with about thirty Kolaris, all more or less damaged during that evening's fight, to go to Sitoli, Salah Mahomed's village, a mile further into the hills.

CHAPTER IV

THE PURBIAHS AND KOLARIS

DWYRE had gone barely a mile when he, too, heard the sound of the firing from Barachina. He turned his horse and started to gallop back.

As he got near the lines he saw that the outbreak the Colonel had feared had already come to a head ; that the Purbiahs and Kolaris were at each other's throats ; and that one party or the other had already set fire to part of the lines. It was now practically dark, though the night was clear, and, as far as he could make out, the Purbiahs were holding the office and the Kolaris attacking it. He saw no sign of the Colonel, but presumed he would be engaged in trying to bring the Kolaris to a more reasonable frame of mind, and he decided the only thing he could do was to try and calm the Purbiahs.

His horse, frightened by the noise and flashes, refused to go nearer than a hundred yards from the office and the shouting and noise of the firing prevented the Purbiahs from hearing him come up, though some at least of the Kolaris must have seen him. He called out "Tej Singh !" at the top of his voice, and was just on the point of dismounting, despairing of getting his horse any nearer the office, when two or three bullets whistled past him and

about a dozen Purbiahs rushed out from behind the office towards him.

He did not at once realise what had happened. Fortunately for him, however, his horse, already almost beyond control with fright, bolted straight for his stable. Dwyre managed to wheel him round on to the Meerut road and steady him down a little. This gave him time to see the bearing of what had just taken place, and he made the best pace he could to the pass and Jardigne's camp.

The distance and intervening hills had prevented Jardigne from seeing or hearing anything of what was occurring at Barachina, and it was not until Dwyre rode into his camp just as he was finishing his supper that he realised from the state of both man and horse that something serious had happened and guessed what it was. Dwyre rode up to him in a state of considerable excitement and, even before dismounting, started telling his tale.

Jardigne broke into a loud roar of laughter and slowly walked to the pony's head.

"Don't give it away," he said quietly, when he got to the pony's head, having effectually silenced Dwyre by his unexpected and light-hearted way of receiving the news. "My orderly is just behind the tent, cleaning my rifle. Dismount and come and have some supper and tell me quietly what has happened. The orderly evidently doesn't know anything about it yet. Sais," he called out, "come and take the sahib's horse."

Instead of the sais, the orderly, Fazl Ali, came up with Jardigne's rifle in his hand.

"The Purbiahs have mutinied," said Fazl Ali quietly.

Jardigne was surprised to find that the orderly already knew what had happened and, from the matter-of-fact way in which he made his remark, obviously foresaw and expected the mutiny.

"You knew this was going to happen," said Jardigne angrily. "Where are the other sahibs?"

"It was Subedar Niaz Mahomed's order that Your Honour should be at the pass to-night."

"Niaz Mahomed? What has he got to do with it? What has happened to the other sahibs?"

"Your Honour is here. I have obeyed the Subedar Sahib's orders. It will be better to ask him. The Subedar Sahib also said that, if the Purbiahs mutiny to-night, then it will be better if the sahib leaves his camp and remains on the high hills overlooking the pass. Then, even if the Purbiahs do not wait to loot the station, they will not find the sahib in the night, and in the morning his rifle shoots further down the hill than the Purbiah muskets up the hill."

Jardigne looked at Dwyre in surprise.

"Come and have something to eat, and tell me what has happened," he said. "The Kolaris evidently knew this was coming off. I suppose it is another row between them and the Purbiahs, and this panther was just a plant to get me out of the way. But why weren't the other British officers got out of the way at the same time? What has happened to them?"

Dwyre sat down and, while he was eating his supper, told Jardigne about Niaz Mahomed's inter-

view with the Colonel, and his own adventures since the Colonel had sent him off to recall Jardigne, but he could not of course throw any light on the fate of the other British officers.

"As far as I can see now," he said, when he had finished his story, "this is not merely a row between the Kolaris and the Purbiahs. I don't pretend to know what the attitude of the Kolaris is, but the Purbiahs most certainly fired on me, which I don't think they would have done if it had been merely a row between the Kolaris and themselves. Now I come to think of it, the Kolaris must have seen me, but they didn't fire on me. The Kolaris knew, or at any rate made a pretty good guess, that this was going to happen either to-night or at any rate in the very near future, so they got you out of the way."

"Where do you think Banton may be?" asked Jardigne.

"At the time the mutiny broke out, Banton was actually in the lines," Dwyre replied. "If he was in the Purbiah lines, I am afraid he is done for; but if he was in the Kolari lines, he may have escaped. The probability is that he was in the Kolari lines, as someone was obviously leading the Kolaris. They seemed if anything to be getting the better of it; besides, as I said, they didn't fire at me. I hope it was Banton, but it may have been the Colonel."

"But if a British officer had been there, he must have seen you, and in that case he would have called out to you," Jardigne objected.

"Very possibly he did," Dwyre replied. "Pro-

bably I would not have seen or heard him. I was too occupied with my pony. It was the pony that left the battlefield with me, you know, not me with the pony. He bolted when we got near to the firing. Anyhow, we'll hope Banton was in the Kolari lines somewhere, and so escaped. Clarke was in the hospital, operating on Gopal Singh. He came to the mess just after you had gone and told me. He doesn't seem to have come out here—and he knew you were here because I had told him you were coming out after a panther. Besides, he could not have got to the Kolari lines from the hospital without going past the Purbiah lines, so I am afraid he is done for. If I know Clarke, he would not leave an operation, whatever might be going on in the lines."

There was a moment's silence, then Jardigne spoke with emotion in his young voice :

"He has probably died trying to save the life of the brother of the man who, it almost seems, is responsible for his death," he said, "though he may have escaped in the dark into the hills to the south, towards Utra. That is Niaz Mahomed's own village.

Dwyre nodded. "That is so," he replied, before continuing his tale. "The Colonel was in his bungalow and, as his orderly is a Kolari and his bungalow is nearer the Kolari lines, he has probably escaped. Besides, as Niaz Mahomed has made such elaborate arrangements for your escape, he doubtless did the same for the Colonel. As far as I myself am concerned, judging from Fazl Ali's countenance, I'm an unwelcome accident here.

Niaz Mahomed gave the Colonel a hint of what was going to happen, but he is no actor, and it was perfectly clear that what happened to me was a matter of absolute indifference to him. However," he continued, speaking again in a more natural and cheerful tone (the dark aspect of things never held Dwyre's attention for long), "I am here now ; and I think Fazl Ali's advice to take to the hills is sound in so far as there seems nothing else to be done. What do you think ? "

Jardigne looked up and saw the glow of the burning cantonment reflected in the sky.

"They have stayed to loot and burn the station," he said, "and I don't think there is any immediate hurry. If we take to these hills above the pass we lose the advantage of my rifle, as these hills are so densely wooded. I think it would be better to make for the 'Ag.' You know it ? "

"Oh, yes," replied Dwyre. "I know it. But we couldn't climb that ; certainly not in the dark."

"I've done it," said Jardigne. "But you have to do it in bare feet."

The "Ag" was a solitary hill, or rather rock, rising straight out of the plain of Barachina, about a mile from where the pass debouched on to the plain. It had a flat top, only about twenty yards long and five yards broad, and practically perpendicular sides, dropping a sheer two hundred feet to the plain.

"Very well," said Dwyre. "I suppose it would be the best place, if we can climb it. Also," he added, "if we get to it before the Purbiahs come

this way. They will certainly make for the pass as soon as they can, probably to-night."

"I don't think we need worry ourselves very much over that," answered Jardigne. "A crowd like that, especially with their women and children, will make a good deal of noise. Besides, if they get there before we do we will have ample warning and can fall back on to the hills above here, as Niaz Mahomed suggests. We shall hear them a mile away."

The younger man then explained the scheme to Fazl Ali, who at first demurred, saying it was the Subedar's orders that he should take the sahib to the hills above the pass. But by this time Jardigne was getting tired of having the Subedar's orders so constantly thrust down his throat and was determined to take his own line; he said he himself was going to the Ag and that the orderly could take the sais and ponies to a place of safety. In the end the sais took the two ponies to his own village, about five miles off, while the two British officers, with the orderly, the shikari and Jardigne's servant, started off for the Ag, carrying with them as much as they could in the way of water and provisions.

Barachina is situated on both sides of the road to Meerut, which comes to an abrupt stop at the north end of the station. The officers' bungalows are on the west side of the road, the sepoy's lines on the east side, the Kolari lines at the north end of the station, the Purbiah at the south end, nearest

the pass. Of the officers' bungalows, on the west side of the road, the Commandant's bungalow is at the north end of the station; next to his is the Adjutant's, then the mess, then the bungalow shared by Dwyre and Jardigne. The doctor's bungalow comes between that and the hospital at the south end of the station.

Tej Singh went straight from the Colonel's bungalow to the Purbiah lines, and there found Havildar Mayan Singh, his right-hand man in this mutiny scheme, and told him to collect twenty Purbiah sepoys, stout men whom he could trust to start the outbreak and who would not hold back at the last moment, and bring them to his quarters.

When these were collected at Tej Singh's quarters, he told Mayan Singh what his immediate plans were.

"The Adjutant," he said, "will be coming down here shortly, and he will draw the arms for these men. As long as he is with you the Kolaris will suspect nothing. I am going to the hospital as soon as he comes and I will shoot the doctor. The sound of that shot will be the signal for you at once to kill the Adjutant. I will give you plenty of time, but in any case do not kill him before you get the signal. If I delay too long, keep him in the lines on some pretext or other, but always with an armed man near enough to kill him at once, directly he hears the signal. Then rush the Purbiah arms, and, as soon as sufficient Purbiahs have armed themselves, rush the Kolari guard and the Kolari arms as well. Remember, once the signal has been given and the mutiny started, everything depends

on carrying the thing through quickly, before the Kolaris can rally and put up an opposition. I will come back to you as soon as possible from the hospital."

At this point a Kolari hospital orderly did actually come and tell Tej Singh that his brother was ill, though Clarke had not sent the message. The man, who had just come off duty at the hospital and was going to the Kolari lines, happening to see Tej Singh, volunteered the information in passing. Tej Singh turned to Mayan Singh and said in the most casual manner: "If the Adjutant Sahib wants to know where I am, tell him my brother is ill and that I have gone to the hospital to see him."

He then persuaded the Kolari orderly to accompany him back to the hospital. He probably had not the slightest suspicion that his brother was seriously ill, but seized on what appeared to be a lucky chance, in case of accidents, of making his actions appear perfectly natural up to the last moment. He had already arranged a secret signal to show those in the conspiracy when the outbreak was on the point of taking place.

He went into his quarters and put a heavy pistol into his belt, hiding it under his coat, and then loitered through the lines towards the hospital, giving the prearranged signal to all the ringleaders, who in turn spread it through the Purbiah lines. While he was engaged in thus spreading the call he received Banton's message and, on arrival at the quarter guard, was rather horrified to find that the Purbiah guard was still unarmed. The accident

of Banton's sending for him had prevented a contretemps which might have led to the failure of all his plans at the very outset. He had been just on the point of going to the hospital to carry out the first act of the tragedy ; what would have happened if he had done so before the Purbiah guard had drawn their arms can be easily imagined.

He now saw the danger of premature action, and waited in the lines until he saw the Purbiah guard actually drawing their arms. As, however, further loitering about the lines might arouse the suspicion of the Kolari hospital orderly, he sent him off to the Kolari lines, saying he would go himself to the hospital.

As soon as the Purbiahs began to draw their arms Tej Singh went straight to the hospital. On arrival there he asked where the doctor was, and the operating room was pointed out to him. Here another orderly stopped him, saying the doctor had given orders that no one was to enter the operating room until he himself came out. At this moment a Purbiah Havildar who was in the secret passed, and Tej Singh gave him the signal. The Havildar asked the orderly some question and, as the latter turned to answer, Tej Singh pushed past him and opened the door of the operating room.

Clarke was in the middle of the most intricate part of the operation on Gopal Singh, when he heard the altercation outside and recognised Tej Singh's voice. When he heard the door opening he turned and stepped up to it at once, intending to bar Tej Singh's entrance and prevent him seeing his brother in his present state on the operating

table and to tell him to come again ten minutes later.

But, as the two men came face to face through the half-opened door, before a word could be said, Tej Singh thrust the muzzle of his pistol into the doctor's chest and fired, killing the doctor outright and also giving the signal for Banton's death.

As Clarke's body fell backwards into the room Tej Singh forced his way in, and there saw his brother's body lying, as he thought, dead and mutilated on the table. The shock of the sight unhinged his mind. He grabbed hold of the knife the doctor had been using and fell on the latter's body, cutting and slashing it to ribbons; and, finally, in his frenzy, cutting his own throat.

CHAPTER V

THE AG : A DIFFICULT CLIMB

AS soon as Mayan Singh saw that Banton was dead he divided his twenty men and, leaving five only at the office, with the other fifteen he joined the guard on the Purbiah muskets, which only consisted of four men. There he held off the Kolari guard until the Purbiahs had drawn their muskets. The Kolari guard had got to within two hundred yards of where the Purbiah muskets were stored, and did a considerable amount of execution amongst the Purbiahs crowded round.

At the commencement of the action the Purbiahs had no recognised leader, and their efforts were undirected and haphazard. Neither Mayan Singh nor any other Purbiah on the spot saw the vital necessity of advancing as soon as their numbers gave an assured prospect of success and of clearing the Kolari guard away from such close proximity to the disorganised mob drawing their muskets. As each man drew his musket he merely joined Mayan Singh's party and blazed away at the Kolaris.

The Purbiahs, having received Tej Singh's secret signal, were more prepared for immediate action than the Kolaris, to most of whom the mutiny came as a surprise. Even those who expected it

did not know the actual moment it would take place. In a short time the armed Purbiahs actually on the spot greatly outnumbered the Kolaris, who had only the original guard and had not yet received any reinforcements from their own lines.

Disorganised and undirected as the Purbiahs were, their greater volume of fire was in the end bound to tell, and the Kolaris were gradually forced back, first to the quarter guard and finally into their own lines. But by then practically the whole of the Kolari wing had drawn their muskets unmolested. They had the advantage, too, of a recognised leader in the person of Niaz Mahomed and, thanks to the immediate action of the men of the quarter guard, they also retained some sort of organisation, as they had drawn their muskets undisturbed and methodically.

It was not part of Niaz Mahomed's plan, however, to run the risk of losing the initial advantage he had already gained by his organisation in a general mêlée in the dark in the enclosed lines. Once he had got Colonel Jayle safely away—and he had only considered him and Jardigne in his plans—he concluded the wisest course was to make for the hills and leave the final destruction of the Purbiahs till daylight, when the advantages would be all on his own side. He therefore did not press his initial advantage too far ; he kept his men well in hand and, at the last moment, setting fire to the lines, under cover of the conflagration made for the hills to the north.

He made his retirement appear as much as possible like a beaten retreat, and he hoped the

Purbiahs would think they had really gained a signal victory and so would stay and loot the station during the night. If this happened he knew that, without any great risk to his Kolaris, not a single Purbiah would escape through the pass on the Meerut road the next morning.

Things worked out exactly as Niaz Mahomed had hoped. The Purbiahs from the very commencement had been hopelessly disorganised, and though every man thought Tej Singh was somewhere, no one had seen him, and they were, perhaps without realising it themselves, without a leader. Each man, after having been engaged in a hard-fought fight, and in the dark, too, suddenly found that there was no enemy left to oppose him. The Purbiahs naturally came to the conclusion that they had gained a signal victory, and they did not anticipate any further interference from the Kolaris.

It is a law of mob psychology that when a man sees anything burning his instinct is immediately to burn something else. The sight of the burning buildings at once set the leaderless mob of mutineers to burn and loot the station. Mayan Singh had been killed in the fight round the Purbiah musket store and, though the fight had ended and the Kolaris retired by eight o'clock in the evening, it was not until after midnight that some of the more level-headed began to wonder where Tej Singh was. A young Naik, Goman Singh, a cousin of Tej Singh's and one of the men who had come up from Meerut after the mutiny there, began to make inquiries. He gathered that Tej Singh had, before the actual outbreak, been heard to state his inten-

tion of going to the hospital to kill the doctor, but could find nobody who had seen him since. In the hope of getting some information there, he collected a few of the less frenzied of the mob and went with them to the hospital, which, being rather separated from the rest of the station, had so far escaped the attentions of the incendiaries. Here he found the traces of the tragedy that had occurred in the operating theatre.

The sight sobered Goman Singh and the men with him, and the thought now struck him that they were still in a hostile country, the more bitterly hostile now after the events of the evening. Neither himself nor any of the men with him could say definitely what had become of the Kolaris. They remembered now that they had seen very few Kolari dead in the lines, and that the muskets of the killed had been taken away. That did not point to the utter defeat of the Kolaris, and Goman Singh for the first time began to suspect Niaz Mahomed's intentions. He saw that the only chance of escape, if his suspicions were correct, lay in getting through the pass on the Meerut road before dawn. He made this clear to the others with him and sent them off to quiet the looting mob of Purbiahs and collect them as quickly as possible at the hospital, where he himself remained to restore some sort of order and cohesion.

This they found was by no means easy. The Purbiahs were not in the mood to listen to counsels of caution, and it was only by spreading the report that valuable loot had been found in the hospital that any number of Purbiahs were persuaded to go

there. On arrival there the great majority, not finding the loot they expected, but only Goman Singh and his Jeremiads, returned to continue the looting of the officers' bungalows. Not until two o'clock in the morning, just as the moon was rising, did they begin to sober down and pay any attention to Goman Singh's warnings.

At last the majority of the Purbiahs collected at the hospital and Goman Singh had to leave the rest to their fate. He started them off, and the whole mob—men, women, children, animals and loot, all hopelessly mixed up—moved off towards the pass. Goman Singh tried to get the crowd into some sort of order, but some men refused to leave their wives, others refused to leave their loot, and others again refused merely for the sake of refusing. The chaos was hopeless. History has proved time and again that, when men have been subject to a strict discipline and the authority upholding that discipline is suddenly removed, the reaction is tremendous and their former state of discipline itself reacts on those men and reduces them to a condition of selfish indiscipline, impossible in any animal but man. A "Soviet" army may have brave men, but it can never have soldiers.

The head of this mob reached the Ag, where it will be remembered Dwyre and Jardigne had decided to take refuge, at about four o'clock in the morning. The British officers saw and heard the Purbiahs coming at least an hour before the leaders reached the Ag and they were able to make all their preparations at their leisure.

Dwyre and Jardigne and the three Kolaris had

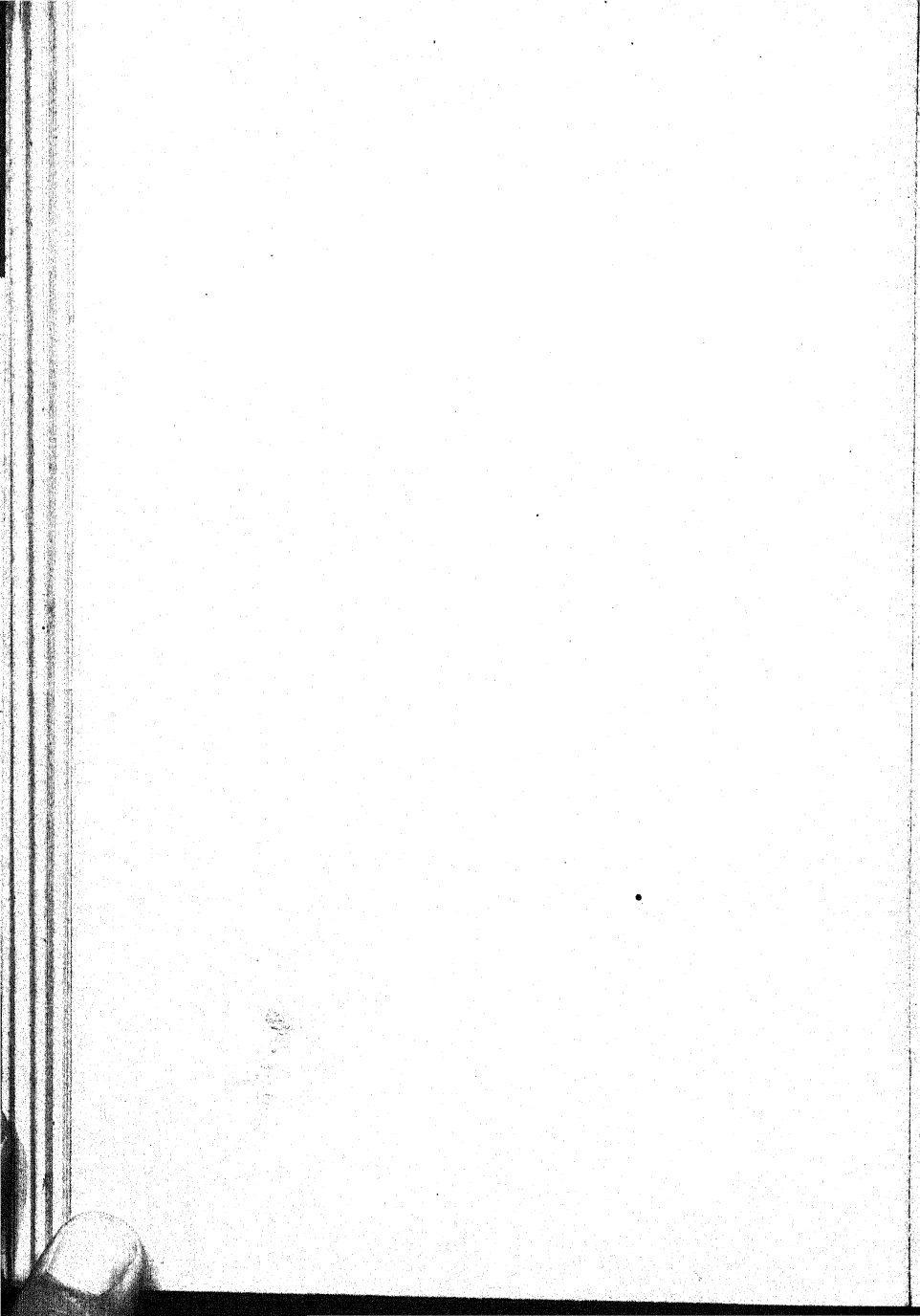
reached the Ag about nine o'clock the previous evening, and had had some difficulty in climbing it. They of course had no rope, but Fazl Ali knew a practicable way up and acted as guide. It was now dark, and the glow of the burning cantonment seemed very near and the noise the Purbiahs made seemed even nearer.

"We are only just in time," said Jardigne. "The Purbiahs must be pretty close. Hang your boots round your neck by the laces, and don't make more noise than you can help. Keep absolutely close to me and put your foot where I put mine. Fazl Ali will lead, as he knows the only way up. If I go too fast let me know. This darkness makes the climb difficult, but at all events it will prevent the Purbiahs seeing us, and the noise they are making themselves will certainly prevent them hearing us. I wish we had thought of bringing the tent ropes. However, let's make a start."

With Fazl Ali leading, and Jardigne, Dwyre, the shikari and the servant following as closely as possible in that order, the difficult climb began. Jardigne constantly had to check Fazl Ali, as he was inclined to push ahead too fast, and each climber had to test each hand- and foot-hold carefully before trusting his weight to it. The climb took an hour, but, once fairly started, Jardigne did not care how long it took. The way they were climbing was up the face of the rock furthest from the road and, even if the Purbiahs did come past before they reached the top of the rock, the darkness of the night would conceal them. At last the top was reached, and the party lay down and



"At last the top was reached."



rested in the centre of the small plateau, safe at any rate for the present.

"Judging from the noise, the Purbiahs don't seem to be any nearer," said Dwyre when he had recovered his breath.

"No," said Jardigne. "I believe they are still looting the station. I wish it wasn't quite so dark now. The cantonment doesn't look four miles from here, does it? Now that we are here, what had we better do when the Purbiahs do come?"

"They will never think we are here. When they have finished burning and looting the station, they will make straight for the pass and Meerut. Let them, I say—what else can we do?"

"I don't know. I suppose *dolce far niente* is really the line indicated, though it doesn't seem as if it ought to be," answered Jardigne dubiously. "The Purbiahs seem to intend to make a night of it and by daylight I could pick off a good many with my rifle before they passed this rock. It would at any rate force them to make a pretty big detour and give Niaz Mahomed plenty of time to establish himself at the pass, as presumably he intends to do. But what if the Purbiahs don't make for Meerut to-morrow? We have only two water bottles between the five of us, and only enough food for a small breakfast."

"Well, if you fire on them they are all the more likely to besiege us, aren't they? I quite see your point in wanting to kill off a few of them before breakfast," Dwyre added, with a short laugh. "But how is that going to help us in the end?"

"It's breakfast I'm thinking of and, still more,

the question of water," answered Jardigne. "If, as it seems, the Purbiahs are going to make a night of it, we shall be on the top of this rock all day to-morrow, and about a pint of water apiece won't go far. We can, at any rate, pour the water into this basin in the rock and send the three Kolaris for more. Fazl Ali seems to know or guess a good deal more about what has happened and what is going to happen than we do. At any rate he seems to know something about Niaz Mahomed's plans. We must rely now on Niaz Mahomed getting us out of this fix. He seems to have taken some sort of an interest in my fate at any rate, and I think it will pay us to try and appease the old scoundrel by playing up to his plans as much as we can now. He may have had some reason for wanting me to be at the pass to-night. What do you think?"

"I am going to consider myself your guest," answered Dwyre, with a grim laugh. "Niaz Mahomed evidently intended to protect you, and equally evidently did not intend to save me. I rather hope he is merely indifferent and not definitely hostile; but, in any case, it seems that my getting off this old rock alive depends on nothing I can do, but on your influence with Niaz Mahomed. So you do just as you like, and I will help in any way I can. I am quite happy as I am up here, for the present anyhow. It is in your hands," he concluded with a laugh, using the common Indian formula.

"All right," said Jardigne, laughing in his turn. As the more strong-minded and quick-witted of the two, he had virtually planned and directed

everything from the moment Dwyre had come to his camp in the pass, and in an emergency such as the present he was certainly not handicapped by any orthodox considerations of seniority. Dwyre thus realising and acquiescing in the position simplified matters for both, and Jardigne turned to Fazl Ali.

"The Purbiahs are still looting the station," he said, "and it looks as if they intended to stay there all night. Where is Subedar Niaz Mahomed?"

"I don't know, sahib, but I think he will be at the pass early to-morrow morning. He will expect to find Your Honour there."

"Well, he will find me here. When the Purbiahs come past I shall fire at them. Then the Subedar Sahib will come and attack them here."

"It would have been better in the pass. Perhaps the Subedar Sahib will not leave the hills. If the Purbiahs do not get through the pass to-night they cannot escape, and the Subedar Sahib will wait in the hills. It will be unnecessary and useless to run the risk of attacking the Purbiahs in the plain."

Jardigne now saw that his original idea of holding the Ag was not such a brilliant plan as he had at first thought. The possibility of climbing down the Ag was still open to him, but climbing down in the dark was a very different matter from climbing up, to say nothing of the risk of the Purbiahs reaching the bottom of the rock before, or at the same time as, he and his party did. If, on the other hand, he remained where he was and opened fire on the Purbiahs, it was fairly obvious that his small party would be besieged. Dwyre refused

point blank to face the descent in the dark, but suggested waiting until the moon rose, when not only would the descent be easier, but they would be able to see whether the Purbiahs had left the station. So it was decided to stay on the rock, at any rate till moonrise. But Jardigne decided that in any case the first thing to do was to provision himself and his garrison as well as he could.

"If the Purbiahs do not come until to-morrow," he said to Fazl Ali, "we shall be here the whole day in the sun; we have very little water. You, the shikari and the servant must get some more and, if you can, some food before the Purbiahs come."

"Very good, sahib," said Fazl Ali, rather relieved at the prospect of something to do; nor was Jardigne averse to escaping from his constant harping on Niaz Mahomed's orders. "There is a spring not a quarter of a mile from the foot of this rock. But how are we to bring the water?"

Jardigne showed him the natural basin in the rock he had already pointed out to Dwyre. "We will pour the water into that," he said. "You will take the empty water bottles. It will take some time, but that cannot be helped."

Fazl Ali went off with the shikari and the servant. At the bottom of the rock he sent the other two off to bring one fly of the tent and all the rope they could find, and all the provisions they could carry from the deserted camp, and himself proceeded to travel backwards and forwards with the two water bottles. He had done the journey three times when, at about midnight, the other two returned

to the base of the rock, and he sent the servant again to get as much provisions as he could carry from the nearest village. Cutting every bit of rope off the tent except the four corner guys, he took this and the tent poles to the top, leaving the shikari to collect what the servant had brought in the way of provisions at the bottom. They found that by using every bit available they could make a rope long enough to reach from the top to about half-way down the rock. Progress was now much quicker, as, using the tent poles as a spar, the two British officers were able to haul everything up the last half of the rock with the rope, while Fazl Ali carried the tent and provisions already at the foot of the rock to the point to which the rope reached.

This provisioning of the garrison went on steadily until three o'clock in the morning, when Jardigne, finding that he was now well provisioned for two or three days and seeing by the light of the moon that the Purbiahs had left the station and were approaching the Ag, collected his garrison at the top of the rock and waited for the leaders of what he at once saw was a disorganised mob to reach the bottom, when he decided to open fire. He hoped Niaz Mahomed would be at the pass by dawn but he was afraid lest the Purbiahs by moving off so early might, in part at least, escape before the Kolaris were ready. For the moment he overlooked the advantage to himself and his small party if the Purbiahs did make good their escape instead of being driven back on to him from the pass. There was now a bright moon, and in half an hour it would begin to be daylight.

The panic and confusion that ensued when Jardigne opened fire on the mob can be imagined. Goman Singh was behind urging on the stragglers. At the head of the column some men opened an ineffectual return fire ; some ran back towards the station from which they had come ; some stood still, absolutely paralysed with surprise. The women, children and animals scattered in all directions, the women running aimlessly hither and thither, undecided whether to leave their husbands or the vicinity of the rock. Everybody yelled advice to everybody else at the top of his or her voice. Fazl Ali had taken care that there should be plenty of ammunition, and into the mob, at that range, every round took effect. Jardigne instinctively, as far as possible, abstained from shooting at the women and children ; and any man who made himself conspicuous as a leader, by attempting to bring some sort of order and cohesion out of the chaos, was shot down at once before he could achieve any result. Dwyre did "spotter" for Jardigne and drew his attention to any man who thus seemed to be anything of a leader ; the servant placidly cooked breakfast in the centre of the plateau out of harm's way ; while Fazl Ali blazed into the crowd with his musket, yelling with delight as each shot took effect. Seeing that Fazl Ali was not doing much beyond killing as many women and children as men, Jardigne told him to save his ammunition and, with the shikari, watch the far side of the rock up which they themselves had climbed.

Goman Singh hurried up towards the head of the

column as soon as he realised the check, trying to persuade all he passed to make a detour round the Ag out of range of the defenders and make for the pass as quickly as possible. Most of the men did so, but by now the women and children and a fair proportion of the men had fled panic-stricken back to Barachina. Dwyre quickly noticed the movement and had no difficulty in recognising the figure responsible for it and pointing it out to Jardigne. As soon as Goman Singh got within easy range Jardigne shot him dead. But the movement had also been noticed by several of the Purbiahs, and those near the rock now gradually drew off and made towards the pass. By five o'clock no Purbiah but the killed and wounded were in range, and the garrison set about pitching their tent as best they could on the rock, over the basin in which their water was stored. There, at last, they ate a rather poor but much appreciated breakfast.

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When Niaz Mahomed left Jayle and Salah Mahomed he did not make straight for the pass across the plain, but first went to his village, Utra, where he stayed overlooking the burning cantonment. There was quite a feasible path from Barachina through Utra leading to the plains, but as this led through rugged hills for over twenty miles it was improbable that the Purbiahs would attempt it unless cut off at the main pass. However, as by moving off at the same time as they he could be certain of cutting them off at the pass, he decided to wait at Utra with his men, only about a hundred

and fifty in all, as long as the Purbiahs remained at Barachina. It seemed to him, too, that the Purbiahs intended to spend the whole night looting and burning, as indeed he had hoped and expected they would.

When, at about two o'clock, his look-out reported that the Purbiahs seemed to be leaving the station and making for the pass he quickly collected his men and, leaving fifty or so to hold Utra, reached the pass with the remainder at about four o'clock in the morning, just as the fight round the Ag commenced. As the Purbiahs withdrew from the Ag he let the leaders get well into the pass before falling on them. Of those that had got into the pass none escaped; but the straggling of the Purbiahs was such that a large proportion of them never entered the pass at all, but, presuming from the firing ahead that it was already held by the Kolaris, returned and collected on the plain out of range of the Ag, but near enough to ensure that the defenders did not escape.

CHAPTER VI

AN INTRIGUING PARLEY

NIAZ MAHOMED did not follow the Purbiahs into the plain. It is possible he could have relieved the garrison of the Ag, as the Purbiahs had no leader and had already lost very heavily. But, out of range of the Ag, they had now recovered some sort of military order and, in spite of their casualties, they still outnumbered the force he had on the spot. In the plain the Purbiahs could have put up a fairly strong defence and, even if successful, the relief of the garrison of the Ag would have cost the Kolaris a disproportionate number of casualties. As long as the Kolaris stuck to the hills the advantages lay all with them, and Niaz Mahomed knew that the Purbiahs would not take to the hills. Even if they did he could rely on the Kolari population to deal with them if they scattered or to give him the necessary information of any body larger than they could themselves deal with.

Sentiment certainly did not enter into his psychology, and he would have made no effort to relieve two beleaguered men if he thought that doing so would cost him three. In this he was perhaps greater than many generals with a great reputation. Even if successful, it is seldom that

the relief of a beleaguered garrison costs less than the fighting strength of that garrison when relieved. It usually costs more, and is sometimes in the end unsuccessful, when it practically amounts to wanton waste. There is no instance on record of Hannibal, Alexander, Cæsar, Marlborough, Wellington or Napoleon ever attempting to relieve a beleaguered garrison.

The rest of the day passed without further incident, and Jardigne had ample leisure to consider his position in all its aspects. He realised, when Niaz Mahomed did not follow the Purbiahs up into the plain, that their escape depended on themselves alone, and that he could expect no help from Niaz Mahomed until he got to the hills. The best course, obviously, was to make for the hills under cover of darkness, but he decided not to do this until absolutely necessary. In the first place, he felt perfectly safe where he was as long as the provisions and water held out, while any moment might bring a change for the better in the situation ; and in the second place, each night that passed gave him practically an extra hour of darkness, as the moon was on the wane and rose later each morning.

A considerable number of Purbiahs, when they saw that the Kolaris did not intend to follow them into the plain, followed their comrades who had fled to Barachina, which, besides being about the furthest point they could get from the dreaded Kolari-infested hills, was also their only source of supplies. Practically all the animals carrying loot had been well up in the van, and had scattered after

the episode at the Ag and were by now well into the hills. The Purbiahs now bitterly regretted the burning and destruction they had only the previous night revelled in and, though Jardigne did not know it, they were nearly as badly off for food as the garrison of the Ag were. However, they maintained a sufficient number near the Ag to make any attempt on the part of the garrison at a break to the hills by daylight impossible.

The next night was cloudy and absolutely pitch dark and Jardigne was on the point of changing his mind and attempting the break to the hills that night, when, from the sounds below, it was obvious that the Purbiahs were themselves attempting to climb the rock. Jardigne realised that if, during the dark hours, the Purbiahs did this, escape would be impossible however dark the night. He had not much fear of the Purbiahs being able to climb the rock on such an absolutely pitch-dark night, as, even on a starlight night and knowing the only practicable path, they had had considerable difficulty themselves. Besides, from the sounds, the Purbiahs seemed to be making their start from the wrong side. But he particularly wanted to discourage such close methods of siege during the only hours when escape was at all practicable. One man therefore stayed up as sentry, and about every twenty minutes or so fired the musket at the sounds below, while the others got what little sleep they could on the hard rock. This periodical shot certainly was not conducive to sound sleep, but it is doubtful whether even without this the British officers at least could have got much sleep under

the circumstances. Jardigne never knew what effect the fire had on the Purbiahs as, by the time the moon rose, they had withdrawn, with any killed and wounded there might have been, out of range of his rifle. And the next morning the sun rose to all appearances on exactly the same scene as that on which he had set the previous evening.

This second day passed, as the greater part of the day before, in inaction on both sides. During the next night the Purbiahs made no attempt to climb the rock, but it was clear to the garrison from the slight sounds below that they were investing the foot of the rock closely. But they had such a respect for Jardigne's rifle that they left the foot of the rock a good hour before dawn.

The third day of the siege broke on the same scene as before. Jardigne had now only enough provisions for breakfast the following day. He suggested making the attempt to break through to the hills just before dawn the next morning. There would be no moon, and it would be necessary to allow two hours for the descent and aim at reaching the bottom as nearly as possible half an hour before dawn. The enterprise would certainly be extremely risky, as practically the whole descent would have to be carried out with the Purbiahs listening just below, and the least sound would give them the alarm. Moreover, there was nothing to which they could tie the rope sufficiently securely to be of any assistance. The only thing in their favour was the fact that there were no loose stones.

"Why not try the effect of parleying with the gentlemen on the ground floor," suggested Dwyre, "before you make the attempt to break to the hills? It can't do any harm, and it may do good. We are only the inner circle of the besieged, mind you—they are every bit as much besieged as we are—and, having burnt the station, are no better off for food and provisions."

"I know that," said Jardigne. "But what are we going to parley about? We have got nothing to offer to induce them to let us escape."

"Say that you will use your influence with Niaz Mahomed to induce him to let them go through the pass. They have already suffered a good many casualties, and probably Niaz Mahomed may be as pleased to put an end to the present deadlock and get on with his own raiding as the Purbiahs would undoubtedly be. Even if it doesn't satisfy the blood-thirsty old villain, they may think the chance good enough to at any rate let you go. If they suggest your going alone, you can say that one man by himself cannot climb down this rock."

"There's certainly no harm in trying," answered Jardigne. "I think myself I would much rather climb down this rock in daylight."

The result of the parley was at first an absolute failure. The Purbiah envoy who came with a white flag in answer to Jardigne's hail refused point blank, and went back to the other Purbiahs. Jardigne had, however during the parley yelled loud and clear enough for several of the other Purbiahs to hear his proposal, and the envoy on

his return found that his abrupt refusal did not meet with general approval. A general council of war decided to send another envoy, and Jardigne and Dwyre were relieved to hear a hail and see this new envoy's approach with a white flag. He came with the proposal that Fazl Ali should be allowed to go through to the hills, provided he swore that, whatever the result of his mission, he would return to the Ag before sunset.

To Jardigne's objection that one man could not climb down the rock alone, the Purbiahs said that the orderly and servant could go, but certainly not the sahib. Hoping the Purbiahs did not know that Dwyre and the shikari were on the rock, Jardigne objected to this, saying it would leave him alone. To this the Purbiahs suggested an armistice till sunset. If the Kolaris kept their word, the sahib would not then be alone; if they did not, it was unfortunate, but not the Purbiahs' fault. To this Jardigne could not think of any plausible objection, and he had perforce to agree.

Jardigne had no particular instructions to give to Fazl Ali, as the orderly had already shown his loyalty to him personally and he thought that, being a Kolari himself, he could better deal with Niaz Mahomed unhampered by particular instructions. When told to go, Fazl Ali at first hesitated.

"If I go by the easier route," he said, "the Purbiahs will watch me and see the best way to climb up. With the tent ropes I can get down the upper and more difficult half on the opposite side, and on that side the lower half is easier than the route by which we came up."

Jardigne agreed to this, and the orderly and servant left the Ag and went to the pass, leaving Jardigne, Dwyre and the shikari with at any rate provisions and water to see them through the next day on the top of the rock.

CHAPTER VII

THE DACOIT POLICE

JAYLE, whom we left with Salah Mahomed at Sitoli, after having been kidnapped to prevent his taking any part in the mutiny one way or the other, spent the day after the mutiny in collecting the scattered Kolaris. He particularly wished to keep the Kolaris of the regiment together, and they had already begun to scatter to their various villages. Fortunately the greater part of the Kolaris were enlisted from that corner of Kolaristan, and, for Jayle's purpose, the few who did not come from that district did not matter. By the evening of the second day he had collected about two hundred.

On the third day, leaving Salah Mahomed with his thirty men at Sitoli, he took these to Utra, hoping to find out there what Niaz Mahomed was doing. Finding he had already gone to the pass, Jayle followed with his two hundred reinforcements. The direct route from Utra to the pass, along the path already referred to, did not pass in sight of the Ag, and he expected to meet Jardigne and, he hoped, Dwyre at the pass. He had joined Niaz Mahomed before he saw the Purbiahs collected near the rock and, to his astonishment, saw the

tent pitched on the top of it. Knowing that Jardigne had once climbed the Ag, he guessed he must now be there, and urged Niaz Mahomed, with the help of the reinforcements he had brought up, to undertake operations in the plain to relieve the besieged. But Niaz Mahomed refused, pointing out the futility of wasting men in an attack in the plain when the Purbiahs must themselves eventually try to force the pass; also, incidentally, that the defenders of the Ag were in their present predicament entirely through disregarding his instructions.

Jayle owed a great deal of his success as an adventurer and his influence among the wild Kolaris to his quickness in abandoning a line of argument which he saw was useless and taking to an entirely different line, working back from that to any particular point to which he wished the other to agree. He now casually asked Niaz Mahomed what his plans were for the future. Niaz Mahomed naturally took it for granted that the point of the relief of the Ag was settled in his favour and, having expected more opposition to his passive attitude with regard to the defenders of the Ag from Jayle, was perfectly willing to change the subject.

"That is obvious, sahib," he said. "We will raid as we did up to two years ago. Only now it will be easier, as there is no *Raj** in Hindustan now."

"Then we had only eighty or a hundred men in the band," answered Jayle. "Now we have about

* British Government.

five hundred. Then we were only badly armed ; now we have Government muskets."

"That will make it all the easier," said Niaz Mahomed, after a pause. He could not at first see what Jayle was leading up to.

"It will," answered Jayle. "Not only will it be easier for us to loot, but it will be more difficult for others. We will be the only band that can loot this part of the plains anyhow. This is the only practicable pass between the plains and Kolaristan, and we can hold this and reserve all the plains within a radius of at least thirty miles from the end of the pass for ourselves. When they see this all the best Kolari *jawans* * will want to join our band ; and we can pick and choose. We will always be a very strong—in fact, the only band."

Niaz Mahomed quite saw the advantage of such a scheme, but doubted its feasibility. While the two were discussing it Fazl Ali came up with Jardigne's message. When Niaz Mahomed heard the message he absolutely refused to allow the Purbiahs to escape through the pass on the terms suggested, and took care to make it quite clear to Fazl Ali that the position of the defenders of the Ag was entirely due to disregard of his orders.

"I told Jardigne Sahib your words, Subedar Sahib," said Fazl Ali, "but he said that in this thick jungle his rifle would be useless or at least no better than the muskets the Purbiahs had. You and the Kolaris were not yet at the pass, and if the

* Young men.

Purbiahs came first Jardigne Sahib alone could not prevent all the Purbiahs getting through the pass. So he went to the Ag. If on the way he met you, well and good. If on the way he met the Purbiahs, he could still return to the pass, and he would have more time to delay them while you were coming to his assistance. If not, and if he could climb the Ag before either arrived, from the top of the Ag he could use his rifle so that the Purbiahs when they came would be stopped a sufficient time for you, hearing the firing, to hurry to the pass and hold it. This is what happened. But for Jardigne Sahib holding them up at the Ag some of the Purbiahs at any rate would have escaped before you arrived."

Fazl Ali merely hoped that this was so. He did not know that Niaz Mahomed was at the pass almost at the same moment that Jardigne opened fire on the leaders of the Purbiah mob making for the same place. Niaz Mahomed did not deceive him.

"It was well done," answered Niaz Mahomed. "Owing to Jardigne Sahib holding the Ag not a single Purbiah has escaped. It would be a pity now to spoil everything by letting so many escape as you suggest."

Jayle saw that Fazl Ali had reached the end of his tether, and he knew that Niaz Mahomed would not be persuaded to let the Purbiahs escape. He still hoped, however, that, by showing that it would be to his own advantage, something might be done to save Jardigne. But to take a sentimental line was worse than useless.

"We can promise to spare their lives if they surrender," Jayle said to Niaz Mahomed. "They have already suffered a lot of casualties, and in any case they will be useful in cultivating the Barachina plain for us and in many ways besides. Also, it is obvious that Jardigne Sahib is right in saying that his rifle would have no advantage over the Purbiah muskets in this jungle. You can't see more than a hundred yards."

"Yes, that is certainly so. But when I gave Fazl Ali his orders I did not realise that."

"Then, if it is more to our advantage to have the Purbiahs alive than dead——"

"And I am not at all sure about that," interrupted Niaz Mahomed.

Jayle did not argue that point for a moment. "I think," he continued, "that, but for Jardigne Sahib holding the Ag, it is certain that some of the Purbiahs must have made good their escape before you arrived here."

"Not at all," answered Niaz Mahomed. "I was here ready when Jardigne Sahib opened fire."

This was rather a poser, but Jayle had too good control over his features to show any chagrin. He did not believe Niaz Mahomed, but it was no good saying so.

"I know that," he replied. "But Jardigne Sahib didn't. I merely say that I think he was perfectly right to hold the Ag, when he knew that he could not by himself prevent the Purbiahs getting through the pass if you had not arrived before them, and if you did arrive before them, you would not need his help in stopping them. But,

as you say, the point is not whether Jardigne Sahib was right or wrong, but how we can make the present situation best suit ourselves. If we offer to spare the Purbiahs' lives as I say, we can use them to cultivate the plain for us and to do a lot of other things that would be a nuisance and waste of time for us to do for ourselves. For instance, they could build us forts here so that we could reserve this pass entirely for ourselves. And there are plenty of other things in which they will be much more useful to us alive than dead. You say that the Purbiahs must eventually try to force the pass when their food runs short and then you will kill them all. That will cost a lot of ammunition and they will naturally defend themselves and so expend a lot of the ammunition they have got. This ammunition cannot now be replaced, and we have not got so much that we can afford to waste it and let the Purbiahs do the same. Soon we will have a band of a thousand men, and every musket and every ounce of powder will be priceless. Besides this, we are at present wasting our time here, and getting no advantage. If we spare the Purbiahs' lives, we will then all the sooner be able to get started with our proper business of raiding the plains. We don't know how long it will be before the Purbiahs do try to force the pass; and in the meantime some other bands of Kolaris are certain to start raiding the plains, and get all the advantage of being the first in the field."

Jayle had put all his force into this final argument and at last he won. Niaz Mahomed at last agreed to the proposal.

"Very well," he said. "I will agree to sparing the Purbiahs' lives, and leave them entirely to you, if you will agree to promise, both for yourself and Jardigne Sahib, to leave the Kolaris to me and not interfere in any way."

Jayle agreed, Niaz Mahomed merely stipulating that the punishment for any Purbiah carrying arms of any description should be death.

Fazl Ali had already informed Jayle and Niaz Mahomed that he had promised to return to the Ag before sunset, and also that he was to take back as much in the way of provisions as he could conveniently carry. Jayle sent him off to collect the provisions, but told him to come back to him before he returned to the Ag, as he could then tell the Purbiahs the terms and also give a message from himself to Jardigne. Fazl Ali withdrew, leaving the other two to discuss the details.

"We can consider the details later," said Niaz Mahomed. "All Fazl Ali need do is to tell the Purbiahs to send ten delegates unarmed to the head of the pass at four o'clock this afternoon. We can discuss the details with them."

"It would be better if Fazl Ali could tell Jardigne Sahib the details as well," said Jayle. "We can tell the delegates that during the night all arms and ammunition must be placed under the Ag, and by sunrise to-morrow all the Purbiahs must be in Barachina unarmed and must not leave without orders. If the terms are accepted, the delegates must come back before sunset and we will keep them as hostages. We will also send a message to Jardigne Sahib that if everything is all right he

will strike his tent, but if there is any suspicion of treachery he will fire his rifle and pitch his tent again. You can at the same time tell the Purbiahs that the punishment for carrying arms will be death, and that it will come into force from sunrise to-morrow."

Niaz Mahomed was unable to improve on this suggestion, and Fazl Ali and the servant returned to the Ag with as much food as they could conveniently carry. After telling the Purbiahs that Niaz Mahomed would meet ten of their number if they came to the head of the pass unarmed at four o'clock that evening to discuss terms, the two climbed the Ag the same way as they had that morning descended and gave Jardigne Jayle's message.

The ten Purbiah delegates met Jayle and Niaz Mahomed at the head of the pass as arranged and, on Jayle pointing out to them that they really had no option and that the offer would not be repeated, they agreed.

The terms of the surrender were complied with without incident, and in the morning the Purbiahs were all in Barachina. Jardigne and Dwyre and the Kolaris climbed down the Ag and met Jayle at the bottom, who told them that Niaz Mahomed had gone straight to Utra. By midday the whole band, including Jardigne, Dwyre and the Purbiah prisoners, men, women and children, were at Utra.

The hope Dwyre had expressed to Jardigne on the Ag was justified. Niaz Mahomed was indifferent rather than hostile. Seeing this, Jayle

wanted to make an opportunity of getting rid of Niaz Mahomed in order to explain to Dwyre and Jardigne what the position was before the possibility arose of a misunderstanding between them and Niaz Mahomed. Their relative positions had changed since they had last met more than either of the British officers could possibly at once realise.

"We have now," Jayle said to Niaz Mahomed, "a band of about four hundred Kolaris, and as many Purbiah men, women and children to feed. We have already wasted a lot of time in settling the mutiny of the Purbiahs, and I think it would be as well if you took about two hundred and made a big raid into the plains before any other Kolari band can be formed. It will save trouble, and be perfectly easy, if you bring back enough food to last all of us three weeks. If you don't do it now other bands will do it in the next day or two, and then there will be less for us."

As soon as Niaz Mahomed had gone to collect his men and was out of earshot Jayle burst into a roar of laughter. Jardigne, remembering Jayle's early history, had by now recovered from the first shock of his surprise and had some inkling of what was in the wind. To tell the truth he was not altogether averse to the prospect; he was certainly better off than most British officers of regiments that had mutinied. Jayle saw from Jardigne's face that he was already more or less reconciled to his new outlook, but the blank look of incredulity and amazement on Dwyre's face was too ludicrous for Jayle in his present light-hearted mood

"Well, Dwyre," he said at last, "you don't seem overjoyed at the prospect, or over-grateful either. You look both surprised and shocked. The position seems to me quite natural. What is worrying you?"

Dwyre could make no immediate reply.

"What am I supposed to be now?" he blurted out at last. "A common brigand?"

Many men would have been annoyed at the obvious insinuation. Jayle merely laughed, but was glad now that he had got rid of Niaz Mahomed.

"What do you want to be? A policeman? Because," he added in a more serious tone, "whether you like it or not, that is more or less what you are going to be. The regiment was originally raised to put an end to Kolari raiding. Well, as things are now, we are strong enough to prevent anybody raiding but ourselves, and that is what I intend to do. You can either call me a brigand for raiding myself, or a policeman for preventing other people raiding. You must look facts in the face and realise that Niaz Mahomed is the most powerful man in this community. At the same time, your only safety within a hundred miles of this spot is as a member of this band of brigands, or police, whichever you like to call them. You are therefore both a brigand and a policeman. You evidently don't quite follow my logic, but think it out, and you will find that I am quite correct. I'll leave you to consider it, and go to see to the building of the first police station."

Jayle went off and set the Purbiahs, under a strong guard of Kolaris, on to building a substantial

fort above Utra, overlooking the Barachina plain. As soon as he had left Dwyre turned to Jardigne.

"Either the mutiny of the Purbiahs has unhinged the Old Man's brain," he said, "or else he deliberately planned it in order to return to his former disreputable existence."

"The second is certainly more likely than the first," answered Jardigne, "but I don't think either supposition is correct. Probably he has merely taken advantage of circumstances over which he personally had no control. Anyhow, I am going to make the best of things as they are, and I advise you to do the same; only don't call the Old Man a brigand to his face, or talk about his former disreputable existence. I personally think being a dacoit for a bit will be rather good fun, and even if any other course was open to us, I'm not sure that I'd take it. But you please yourself; only if you don't become a dacoit, or what the Old Man calls a policeman—I must say I don't follow his logic; he was probably pulling your leg—I don't see what else you are going to become. Unless it's a corpse," he added whimsically.

Dwyre laughed. "As you say," he said, "it's better to be a dacoit, or even a policeman, than a corpse. I quite follow your logic anyway. But I must say I'd get out of this if I could. I think I am going to risk it while Niaz Mahomed is out on his police patrol. Evidently the Old Man thinks Niaz Mahomed would probably prefer my room to my company, and it stands to reason that if Niaz Mahomed and his scalliwag Kolaris can turn the mutiny here into such a fiasco, the British troops

at Meerut must have been at least equally successful. I ought to reach Meerut in about five days, if you can recover our ponies. I shall start tomorrow, so I hope I shan't see Niaz Mahomed again. You can give him my thanks and salaams."

"I wouldn't be in such a hurry if I were you," Jardigne replied. "If you went off now and happened to meet Niaz Mahomed returning from this raid there might be trouble. Whatever salve the Old Man may choose to apply to his own conscience, I don't think Niaz Mahomed has any intention of becoming a policeman. He calls a raid a raid, and if you met him he would not let you go through to tell the authorities how well he was carrying out his police duties. If the mutiny has been suppressed at Meerut, we shall probably hear soon enough."

"In the meantime this raid of Niaz Mahomed's is going to compromise us. The people at Meerut will probably hear of that soon enough," said Dwyre stiffly, his sense of loyalty being stronger than Jardigne's logic.

"They won't connect us with it. Anyhow," the latter argued, "they will have other things to think about. The mutiny is evidently pretty widely spread and carefully organised. The Purbiahs here would not have dared to mutiny unless they were pretty certain of strong support as soon as they got into the plain. They probably expected the men who mutinied at Meerut to come this way and join them, and then join hands with the Sikhs. Even if this mutiny was suppressed at Meerut, I don't see how there could have been such a round up as

there was here. The surrounding country there is certainly not hostile to them, as it is here, and some of them must have escaped. If you went off now, you would be certain to meet them before the British."

"They may have gone off Delhi way."

"Not they!" said Jardigne decisively. "That would be going into the very heart of the country we hold most strongly. I should think half the British troops in India are within two hundred miles south and east of Delhi. If they have the skill to work this mutiny, you must presume that they have the sense to know this. No, their game is probably to concentrate at Meerut; and from there go west and raise the Sikhs against us again. The mutiny has occurred at other places besides Meerut and here, only of course we haven't heard of it as all our news comes through Meerut. You know that the mutiny here was worked by delegates from Meerut, and if Meerut sent delegates here, you can be pretty certain they sent them to every other station where there was a chance of raising a mutiny."

Jardigne left Dwyre to consider this and went off towards the place where Jayle had already started the Purbiahs on to building what he called the first police station.

Jayle looked up when he heard Jardigne approaching and laughed. He had been carefully watching the two engrossed in their argument. "How does Dwyre like the idea of being a policeman?" he said.

"I don't know. He was just now talking of

making his escape to Meerut, but I think I have persuaded him he would never get there and is much better off as he is here. He will probably get more or less reconciled to his position later on, but I don't think it is quite fair to pull his leg just now. I don't think he is over quick at grasping things and, naturally, suddenly finding himself transformed into a brigand was rather a shock at first. But he has recovered now, or at any rate he is temporarily reconciled to his present position, because he can see no way out of it. Though he doesn't go as far as I do yet, he probably soon will. I personally think it will be rather fun to be a brigand for a bit."

Jayle smiled. "You're a blood-thirsty young villain," he said. "You're not yet twenty, and I had no opportunity of becoming a brigand until I was over thirty. You already have almost as much influence with Niaz Mahomed as I have, and I really thought he was going to suggest your taking part in this raid."

"Perhaps it is as well he didn't," Jardigne replied. "It was rather a shock even to me to suddenly find myself transformed into a brigand, and it might have given rather a bad impression at the beginning of my new career if I had shown any hesitation. Here's old Dwyre coming. He doesn't follow your logic about the police part of the show and, for that matter, neither do I. But don't pull his leg any more."

"No, I promise you I won't," answered Jayle. "Hullo!" he said as Dwyre came up. "Jardigne tells me that neither of you have yet solved the

riddle of how to be a brigand and a policeman at one and the same time. You don't follow my logic?"

"No, Colonel. Your logic is entirely beyond me, though I can follow Jardigne's."

"What was that? It may be easier to explain mine from it as a starting point."

"Oh, Jardigne merely said it was better to be a brigand, or even a policeman, than a corpse."

"I'm afraid, Jardigne," said Jayle with a slight twinkle in his eye, "your logic is not particularly complimentary to a very fine and useful body of men."

"Well," answered Jardigne, "is yours?"

This question at first rather took Jayle aback. "Well," he said at last, "I myself think that my logic is not uncomplimentary to the police as a civil body. It is what I may call a fair caricature of them. The easiest way to lead up to a full explanation is for you to tell me your adventures since the outbreak, and then I will tell you mine. From that the explanation will be easy."

When Dwyre had told his adventures from the time he had left Barachina to recall Jardigne up to the relief of the Ag, and Jayle had done the same, it was getting dusk, and Jayle suggested an adjournment to Jardigne's tent, the only home they had at present.

"Well," said Jayle, when they were settled down, "I don't think there is very much more to explain now that you know how I escaped. Niaz Mahomed, of course, thinks that I intend to return to my old adventurous existence—and I don't mind acknowledging at once that I would if I could. But

I realise that I can't. In the first place, it wouldn't last long enough to make it worth my while. This mutiny, if it is not already quelled, will be quelled in a month, and then my career as a dacoit would be at an end. In the second place, it would be hopelessly compromising you two. In the third place, I raised the regiment, and I want it to continue as such after this mutiny is quelled, but, as I originally suggested, Kolari pure and simple, without the Purbiahs, who are regarded by the inhabitants of the country much more as foreigners than we are and are a permanent source of possible trouble. When it comes to settling up accounts after this mutiny, I want to be able to show that the loyal remnants continued to carry out the duties for which the regiment was originally raised—to stop dacoity. In the meantime we have got to pander to Niaz Mahomed to some extent, and try and prevent his compromising us too far. What we do during the next week or so hardly matters, as the authorities will be too seriously engaged. That is why I gave Niaz Mahomed his head and sent him on this raid now. He has no idea of my real object, but for purely selfish reasons he is quite willing to comply. Until the mutiny is quelled, and we can reorganise the regiment on a satisfactory basis, it is obvious that not only ourselves but the Kolaris must live—and live together as an organised body. If you can think of any other way," he said, rising and looking quizzically at the other two, "except dacoity, to do so, I should be glad to hear it. Soon, however, I hope to live on the proceeds of the Purbiahs' cultivation and the capture of

other raiders' loot, without the necessity of raiding ourselves. So that, when eventually we are found here, to all appearances we shall have been carrying on our ordinary duties, and then I intend to claim back pay, both for ourselves and the Kolari wing of the regiment. But remember that, though both Niaz Mahomed and ourselves will at first be playing the same game, our objects are diametrically opposite, and it will require a good deal of tact on our part to get him to comply with our scheme without realising it. It will take time to get the Purbiahs to cultivate the plain sufficiently to keep both themselves and us, but it ought to be done by the end of the rains. Until then we must live, either by raiding ourselves, or on the proceeds of others' raids; for preference the latter. Now do you understand?"

"Oh, yes," said Dwyre, rather truculently. "I see. The argument is, that I'm to be a dacoit and, in order to call myself a policeman, I've got to encourage others to be dacoits, in order to capture their loot. If I can't do that, or I'm successful in stopping dacoity, I shall have to either take to dacoity pure and simple myself, or else, as a policeman, arrest you and Jardigne and all your Kolaris. I'll think about it."

"Don't!" answered Jayle. "Police don't arrest police. We shall all still be police, even when we are the only dacoits in the district. If we aren't the police, who are?"

"It seems there won't be any at all."

"Then who prevents the indiscriminate dacoities?"

"Well, I suppose in a way we do; but that doesn't make us police. The police seem to manage to uphold law and order without themselves indulging in open and organised crime."

"That is owing to the change in circumstances," answered Jayle. "You know the regiment was raised to stop dacoity. That is what you were sent here for. You must acknowledge that my suggestion at least offers a prospect of eventually putting an end to dacoity, when we can live on the crops grown by the Purbiahs; and it is obvious that dacoity will be less if confined to ourselves than if the whole Kolari population indulged in it. In the meantime the police must live. How do you suppose we are going to live without dacoity?"

"Oh, I grant you that we have to be dacoits; but I say that to call ourselves police at the same time is merely far-fetched hypocrisy."

"Then I disagree with you. I'm afraid you are prejudiced by my former career. It's no use trying to be tactful," added Jayle, foreseeing a half-hearted denial. "That is quite out of place here and now. You may not think it, but the whole ambition of my life has been to become a policeman; and now that I have the chance, I don't intend to be thwarted by your scruples. Besides, I want your co-operation. Your scruples alone show what an ideal policeman you would make, if only I could convince you how easy it is. Look here! You must acknowledge that, even under the most peaceful conditions, the police must live in order to carry out their duties."

"Yes, I acknowledge that much."

"And that circumstances are different now from what they were, say, a week ago?"

"Yes."

"Well, in the ordinary course, how do the police live?"

"They get paid, of course."

"And who pays them?"

"The Company."

"And where does the Company get the money from to pay them?"

"From taxes, I suppose."

"And who pays the taxes?"

"The people of the country, of course."

"Well, that works all right in ordinary civilised society. But you must see that, in a roundabout way, the police are paid by the people of the country whom they protect. Now, who is going to pay us?"

"Nobody," said Dwyre, after racking his brains for some other answer.

"On the contrary, we are going to be paid by the people we protect. And, what is more, we are going to be paid a comfortable living wage. Soon, however," Jayle added more seriously, "I hope to live on the cultivation of the Purbiah prisoners, and persuade the Kolaris of the regiment to give up raiding altogether, and live on the proceeds of other people's raids and the work of the Purbiah prisoners."

Jayle saw that he had at least convinced Jardigne, who was in the mood to be convinced, and considered it advisable to leave further argument with Dwyre in his hands. He therefore left the

other two, and strolled over to where the new police station was being erected.

"Well," said Jardigne, after Jayle had gone out of earshot. "Are you convinced now?"

"No," Dwyre replied. "Are you?"

"I can't say that I am, really. I'm just as convinced as I want to be; that is, until you can give me a better argument for any other way out of our present position. We've got to face things as they are, and I don't think a too careful and scrupulous examination of the Old Man's logic will help us in the least. He takes to this sort of thing quite naturally; and, of course, when it comes to an argument he would prove white was black, by pouring ink over it."

"Yes," said Dwyre, "he'd argue the hind-leg off a donkey."

"Yes, and then argue it back again, probably upside down. Think of the poor beast with only one hind-leg."

"What are you drivelling about?" Dwyre said, bursting out laughing.

Jardigne got up and gazed aimlessly towards the new "police station" which was being erected on the hill above them.

"Anyhow," he said, "the poor brute's fore-legs would be intact."

"You idiot! Of course they would."

"Yes; two in front, and two behind," and he dodged a stone Dwyre threw at him and went off laughing to where he saw Jayle standing and watching them.

Dwyre followed, now convinced. He had no

further scruples about Jayle's system of "dacoit police"; or, if he had, he kept them to himself. Which merely shows how much easier it is to convince a man by making him laugh than by making him think.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FIRST RAID

LEAVING the remainder of his band under cover in the pass, Niaz Mahomed went forward with ten men to the south end where it debouched on to the main Indian plain to reconnoitre. But he found that others had forestalled him. The first thing that met his eye on looking over the plain was the smoke of three burning villages, and a raiding party of Kolaris returning at their leisure, driving goats, sheep, cattle, camels and ponies, some laden with loot, others loose, before them towards the pass leading back into Kolaristan.

This mob was, however, still two or three miles from the south end of the pass, and Niaz Mahomed retired unobserved with his men, back into the hills, to consider the best course to take.

Another raid in a different direction would waste a lot of time, and also mean a considerable amount of trouble. A raid anywhere in the region of the burning villages would be useless, as the inhabitants would have been alarmed, and either they would have made good their escape with their property if they did not intend to defend it, or they would have taken adequate steps to defend their villages if they considered themselves strong enough to do so. This returning raiding party must have caught the

plainsmen unawares, before they had had time to either conceal or take steps to protect their property; and, judging from the animals Niaz Mahomed had seen in the distance, it must have been a much more successful affair than he himself could hope to bring off now that the countryside was alarmed and prepared. He was not the man to pay much consideration to the after effects of his actions. His sole idea was to get what he wanted with as little risk and trouble as possible. Here was a chance to get the loot he wanted without even leaving Kolaristan; and that he was playing into Jayle's hands he did not for a moment consider.

The pass was about four miles long, the steepest and most difficult part being just before it debouched on to the Barachina plain, about two thousand feet above the main Indian plain. About half a mile south of this point a track turned off up a steep ravine to Utra, and in this half-mile the road to the Barachina plain rose five hundred feet between precipitous and practically inaccessible cliffs. Niaz Mahomed decided that at this point, where the track from Utra joined the main road up the pass, the convoy should change hands. He left the ten men who were with him to delay the raiders as much as possible at the mouth of the pass, and try to persuade them to remain there, conversing and refreshing themselves, so that they would have to negotiate the pass in the night, which promised to be pitch dark.

The ten men left at the mouth of the pass hid their muskets and went down on to the road, where

they waited for the other raiding party. There was naturally a good deal of confusion at the mouth of the pass, and Nishan Ali, Niaz Mahomed's brother and the leader of these ten men, had no difficulty in finding the leader of the other raiding party. This man, Akbar Ali, happened to be well known to him as a rival of Niaz Mahomed's in the early days, and Nishan Ali was at first treated with a good deal of suspicion. The raiding party consisted of about fifty Kolaris and the convoy consisted of at least five hundred animals of all descriptions, several loaded with the loot obtained from the three burnt villages.

Nishan Ali managed to overcome this man's suspicions, in part at least, by persuading him to tell the story of the raid and praising his skill as a raider and asking him to be allowed to join his band with the men with him.

"Niaz Mahomed, my brother, has killed all the Sahib-log and Purbiahs, and when he came to Utra and I claimed my share of our father's property, he turned me out as I am. Any who opposed him he either killed or drove out, and he took everything he could carry into Barachina, where he says he will live as a sahib. I can do nothing with only ten men. But if I can join you I do not ask for any share in the proceeds in this raid; but, at the same time, another ten men will be a help to you in getting the loot through the pass. It will be difficult for only fifty men to get all these animals through the pass before dark."

That was already obvious.

"I have a suggestion to make," continued

Nishan Ali, when the delay had been sufficient to suit his and Niaz Mahomed's object.

"Well?" Akbar Ali asked.

"It would be best to collect all the animals together in the pass and there halt for the night. It will be dark before we could get half-way through the pass, and in the dark it will be difficult to prevent the animals straying, once they reach the Barachina plain. Then Niaz Mahomed will get the benefit of a lot of the loot," he added spitefully. "It will be best to send ten men about a mile up the pass, and stop and collect the animals there as you drive them up. I will take my own ten men and do this for you, if you like. Then the animals can be easily kept together and guarded."

Akbar Ali ignored Nishan Ali's offer to take his men up the pass to assist him. He had not yet got over his suspicions, and Nishan Ali dare not repeat his offer. Akbar Ali looked askance at any suggestion that originated with the other. Nishan Ali's suggestion had, however, put an idea into Akbar's head, on which he proceeded to act. He called Mahomed Ali, his second-in-command, and sent him on ahead with twenty-five men to the head of the pass, where it debouched on to the Barachina plain. On the way he told him to leave men at any points where the animals were likely to stray off the road, and with the remainder to collect the animals as soon as they got clear of the pass on the Barachina plain. As Akbar Ali also considered it advisable to divide Nishan Ali's party, he sent half of them with this advanced guard under Mahomed Ali.

When Nishan Ali found that his plan for detaining the raiders at the south end of the pass had fallen through, he did not despair of turning this new plan to Niaz Mahomed's advantage; but first it was necessary that Niaz Mahomed should know what Akbar's plans were. It was impossible to get away himself without arousing suspicion, but at the first opportunity he sent off one of his men, who had been listening to the conversation between himself and Akbar Ali, to inform Niaz Mahomed what the raiders' plans were.

Having arranged for this information reaching Niaz Mahomed, Nishan Ali set about taking such steps as he could for his own safety. The first thing to do was to get his men armed, but as soon as he broached the subject to Akbar Ali the latter's suspicions were again aroused and he would not hear of it. As he rightly objected, it was unnecessary, now that they had got the loot back into the hills; and it would delay the convoy unnecessarily to collect the guns and ammunition from the loot.

Akbar Ali's suspicions were confirmed when he saw that Nishan Ali by excessive display of energy, was merely delaying the convoy and throwing it into confusion. Mahomed Ali, who was waiting till the convoy got fairly started before taking his party up to the Barachina plain, was in favour of turning Nishan Ali's party adrift or killing them; but Akbar Ali would agree to neither of these suggestions. Supposing his belief in their treachery was correct, then if they were turned loose they would take information of the existence of the convoy and his own plans to Niaz Mahomed, who

might attack the convoy in the pass; and if he killed them, he would perhaps unnecessarily arouse the hostility of Niaz Mahomed and his powerful band. Supposing his suspicions were not correct, and Nishan Ali's story of his quarrel with his brother was true, then, alive and in Akbar Ali's power, Nishan Ali would be a useful asset, either to hand over to Niaz Mahomed if he was disposed to be friendly, or as an ally if he was disposed to be hostile. So it was finally decided to allow Nishan Ali and his men to join the band when they and the loot arrived safely at the village; but in the meantime Nishan Ali would be kept as a hostage. If the convoy were attacked in the pass, or if any of his men attempted to leave the convoy, he would be killed at once.

Nishan Ali pretended to be willing to acquiesce in anything, provided an early start was made to get through the pass before Niaz Mahomed could capture him. So Nishan Ali was bound and put under guard of one of Akbar Ali's men, who was ordered not to move out of reach of the prisoner, and to kill him at once in the event of an attack on the convoy.

As soon as the convoy had got fairly started up the pass Mahomed Ali went forward with his party to the Barachina plain. Though he had to leave men from his party on the road to prevent the animals straying up nullahs and tracks which joined the main road, he kept the five men of Nishan Ali's band with him, not daring to leave them as stops in case they deserted and took information to Niaz Mahomed. When, therefore,

he arrived at the point where the track from Utra joined the main road up the pass he was in a dilemma. He had only three of his own men and five of Nishan Ali's.

From this point to the Barachina end of the pass the road rose abruptly between steep cliffs, and he knew that no further stops would be required. It was between these two points that any attack on the convoy or his party would, as far as he could judge, be made. It was now dark, and he wished he had got rid of these men earlier, of whose good faith he was suspicious; but it was out of the question to alter the arrangements now. That would necessitate starting afresh, and now it was a question of getting the convoy over the Barachina plain before dawn instead of through the pass before dark.

It was equally out of the question to put two of his own men at this point. That would leave him only himself and one other man to watch the five doubtful Kolaris and at the same time to collect the convoy on the plain at the head of the pass, where, if anywhere, Niaz Mahomed would attack it from Barachina. And if these men did intend to desert and give information to Niaz Mahomed, it would be easier from the plain than if they were kept in the pass. The Kolari raiders, ever since the raising of the regiment, had come to regard this point instinctively as the dangerous point when bringing back loot from the plains. It would have been perfectly easy, in the darkness and during the confusion of collecting the animals at the head of the pass, for one or all of Nishan Ali's men to slip

away and give the information of what was going on to Niaz Mahomed at Barachina, where Mahomed Ali believed him to be.

The original objection to leaving any of Nishan Ali's men as stops, the possibility of their deserting, still applied ; he dared not leave any of them here by themselves. Besides, the more men he left here, the fewer he would have to collect the animals at the head of the pass. As the best way out of the difficult position he decided to compromise, leaving one of his own men and two of Nishan Ali's at this point ; and with two of his own men and three of Nishan Ali's he went on to the head of the pass.

When Mahomed Ali and his advanced guard got clear away it took some little time for Akbar Ali to get the animals moving. The column was at least a mile long, and it was quite dark before he got them properly moving, with himself and his men behind. The stops that had been left by Mahomed Ali helped to some extent to keep the animals moving and, joining him as he passed them, increased the number of men he had available to help him. But, what with the darkness and the attempts of the animals to break back to the plains and the congestion due to the leaders' unwillingness to go forward, the convoy did not proceed more than about half a mile an hour ; and it was three o'clock in the morning before Akbar Ali reached the point where the Utra track met the main road. Here he found no stop to prevent the animals going up the path to Utra ; and, judging from the tracks, the greater number appeared to have gone up that

path, though a certain proportion had gone up on the main road towards Barachina.

Akbar Ali's Kolaris suspected treachery and urged him to kill Nishan Ali and his men and have done with them. But Akbar Ali was at first unwilling to do this. He decided to seize all Nishan's men before doing anything to Nishan Ali himself, and this was done on a signal from him, and the others were seized and bound. As Akbar Ali pointed out, they could then be killed any time he chose; but once killed they would be useless as hostages or bribes, according as Niaz Mahomed was disposed to be hostile or friendly.

When Nishan Ali's men had been secured, one of the other Kolaris, more observant than the rest, noticed that one was missing. This appeared to be conclusive proof of treachery, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that Akbar Ali prevented his followers from massacring the prisoners. He called Nishan Ali to him.

"How many men had you with you when you joined me?" he asked.

"Nine," answered Nishan Ali without any hesitation. He had noticed the second commotion, and guessed it was due to the absence of the messenger he had sent to Niaz Mahomed having been discovered.

"There are only three here now, besides yourself," said Mahomed Ali. "Where are the others?"

"They are with your advanced party, I suppose."

"Only five of them went with Mahomed Ali," said the man who had first discovered that one was absent.

Akbar Ali advanced towards Nishan Ali, threatening him with his gun.

"Where is the other one?" he asked.

"How should I know?" Nishan Ali replied with a show of indifference. "You have kept me a prisoner ever since I set foot in your camp. I am only surprised all my men did not go when they saw how I was treated. Who is the man that is gone?"

This question took some little time to answer, but the other Kolaris who had come with Nishan Ali, gathering from the line he had already taken that there could be no harm in telling the truth, by an apparent process of elimination, found that none of them had seen one, Nur Bukhsh, go with the advanced party; and Akbar Ali's men at once came to the conclusion that he had escaped and gone off with information to Niaz Mahomed.

Nishan Ali in the meantime, seated himself on a rock and apparently was taking no interest in the discussion whatever. Akbar Ali came up to him and told him abruptly that Nur Bukhsh had gone off to give information to Niaz Mahomed.

"In that case," answered Nishan Ali, "Niaz Mahomed will hear nothing about it. He will kill Nur Bukhsh before he can open his mouth. No. Nur Bukhsh hasn't gone to tell Niaz Mahomed. He may intend to send word to him, but you can be fairly certain that Niaz Mahomed will hear nothing about it until the early morning at the earliest. He is at Barachina, and may possibly come to the head of the pass to intercept you there early tomorrow morning.

"Anyhow, I wish you would do something instead of keeping me here all night. I don't want Niaz Mahomed to find me here bound. The best thing you can do is to go straight home and get there before dawn with as much of the loot as has gone up the pass to the Barachina plain. Then you can release me and my men and I can start a band of my own. I will recover the rest of your loot for you, if you like, and give you half of it to-morrow. Only do something at once. I don't want Niaz Mahomed to find me like this, without a chance to either defend or kill myself."

"You need not fear that," answered Akbar Ali. "If Niaz Mahomed finds you, I promise you that he will not find you alive." And with that he swaggered off to discuss with his own men the best way both to collect the loot and be clear of the pass before dawn, by this time only two hours off.

He finally came to the conclusion that Nur Bukhsh must have slipped off in the confusion ensuing from getting the convoy started, either to give information to Niaz Mahomed, or, as he now thought more probable, to collect a small band for himself, and divert and collect the loot at Utra, which was known to be his native village. Nur Bukhsh could not have collected a formidable gang yet, and Akbar hoped both to recover the loot that had turned up the path to Utra and get clear of the pass before dawn. So, leaving two men at the pass to drive the animals towards Barachina, and to prevent them straying back toward the plains, he started up the track to Utra with the rest of his men, giving orders that any animals overtaken

were to be passed, and care was to be taken not to drive them further towards Utra.

This order, however, was unnecessary, as no animals were overtaken until the party had nearly reached Utra, when all the animals were found collected in the nala below the village. As everything seemed so quiet and there appeared to be nobody watching the animals, Akbar Ali, rather against the better judgment of the majority of his men, decided to try and get the animals on to the main road and through the pass on to the Barachina plain, and so to his own village. The direct route from Utra across the plain was out of the question, as this would necessitate going straight through Utra village itself, and also passing close to Barachina in broad daylight.

While this discussion was going on as quietly as possible, three men were seen to be coming down the hill from the village towards the raiders directly behind the animals. Akbar Ali ordered silence and allowed them to approach within speaking distance. When they were about twenty yards off they stopped, and one of them asked Akbar Ali's men who they were and what their business was.

"I am Akbar Ali, of Hadwani village. Who are you?"

"I am Niaz Mahomed, of Utra village," replied the spokesman of the party, and the three at once advanced in an open and friendly manner. "Are these animals yours?"

Akbar Ali at once recognised Niaz Mahomed, but he was so nonplussed at his apparent friendliness and lack of suspicion that he had no time to

tell his followers whether or not Niaz Mahomed was to be seized before the latter had joined the party and seated himself by Akbar Ali, and then he repeated his question.

"Yes," answered Akbar Ali. "I raided three villages in the plains. This is the result."

"But why have you brought them here?"

"This is only a portion of the loot, which has strayed from the main convoy while I was driving it up the pass."

"Oh!" Niaz Mahomed said. "I will help you drive them back to the pass as soon as it gets light enough, for a share of the loot."

Akbar Ali considered for a moment. The only reason for getting through the pass before dawn had now disappeared in the appearance of Niaz Mahomed at Utra. He realised that for the future it would be better to have Niaz Mahomed as a friend than as an enemy, and even without this consideration he was for the moment in none too secure a position. He could, it was true, either seize or kill Niaz Mahomed, but he knew him well enough to be sure that he would not have deliberately thrust himself into his present position without taking effective steps to ensure his own safety. So he decided to accept Niaz Mahomed's offer and make the best of the position.

"Well," he acknowledged, "as I was so careless as to let the animals stray, it is only fair that I should have to pay your toll. As soon as it is light you can choose ten animals with their loads. If I had known you were here," he added with a smile, in order to change the subject (judging from Niaz

Mahomed's countenance, he saw that the offer did not err on the side of generosity), "if I had known you were here, I would probably not have followed the two or three animals here just before dawn. I certainly would not have brought the whole of the loot. But I was told you were at Barachina."

"Have you not heard of the mutiny there? Who told you I was at Barachina?"

"Nishan Ali," answered Akbar Ali.

A scowl clouded Niaz Mahomed's face. "When was that? Where did you see him?" he asked. But the question was unnecessary, as at that moment he had caught sight of Nishan Ali and the other prisoners. Niaz Mahomed jumped up and rushed towards him, drawing his knife as he did so, and called to the other two men with him to kill the others. Nishan Ali jumped up and fled in and out amongst the other Kolaris, who thoroughly enjoyed the sport. Bound as he and his fellow prisoners were, he had no chance of finally escaping from Niaz Mahomed; but as long as he kept amongst Akbar Ali's men, the latter, to prolong the sport, impeded their pursuers as much as possible. At last Niaz Mahomed got Nishan Ali and his men separated from Akbar Ali's Kolaris, and they perforce had to run up the hill towards the village, followed by Niaz Mahomed and his men. Niaz Mahomed called out, and several men came out of the village and ran to intercept Nishan Ali and the other fugitives.

It was now light enough for Akbar Ali and his men to watch the result of the chase, and the sport held their whole attention to the exclusion of every-

thing else. But the climax was so unexpected that, when it did come, none of them really knew how it had happened. Niaz Mahomed soon overtook Nishan Ali, but instead of killing him as the spectators expected, he proceeded to cut his bonds. Before Akbar Ali and his men could recover from their astonishment at this climax to their sport they found themselves overpowered, disarmed and bound by a party of about fifty Kolaris, led by two Englishmen. This party had crept behind them from the direction of the pass while all their attention had been fixed on the chase that had been taking place in the opposite direction.

After the sudden capture of their leader and the majority of his men the remainder, scattered amongst the animals, made no resistance and were soon rounded up and hustled with the other prisoners into Utra. On the way they were met by yet a third Englishman, considerably older than the two who had led the party that had actually effected their capture. Jayle, for it was he, was talking to Niaz Mahomed and Nishan Ali, and when he saw Akbar Ali he detained him and told him to give an account of the raid on the plain.

The sight of Akbar Ali reminded Nishan Ali of the former's gang who had been sent forward as an advanced guard to the head of the pass on the Barachina plain. He told Jayle of this party, and advised that immediate steps should be taken to meet any attempt they might make to recapture the convoy. The three postponed their hearing of Akbar Ali's story and the inspection of the captured booty until they had seen to this. They passed

through the animals and went up to Dwyre and Jardigne, who were conversing together below, and found that they had already taken steps to prevent any chance of surprise from stragglers of Akbar Ali's gang.

Jayle told them about the advanced party that had been sent on to the plain under Mahomed Ali. According to Nishan Ali, this party had only consisted of about twenty men to begin with ; and, as several of these must have been used as stops on the road, there could not now be more than ten at the outside. Jardigne said that the arrangements made were ample to prevent this number doing any harm, but Dwyre at once proposed to make doubly sure by taking the initiative and going out and capturing them.

Jayle smiled but said nothing when he saw how Dwyre's point of view had altered since the previous evening. As a matter of fact, Dwyre, as soon as the excitement of the capture of the raiders had got into his blood, acted as probably nine out of ten Englishmen similarly placed would have done, and immediately took charge of the men nearest himself, taking a leading part in the proceedings ; in fact, he thoroughly enjoyed it, and acknowledged as much afterwards to Jardigne. Jayle was of course delighted with the change in his attitude. Dwyre was now recognised by all as a member of the band, and, whether he liked it or not, had already done enough to make it impossible for him later to dissociate himself entirely from the others.

"I happen to know," said Niaz Mahomed, "that there are only three of Akbar Ali's band with Maho-

med Ali, and they should not prove very difficult to capture. But catch them as much as possible unawares, to prevent them doing any damage to our men; there are only three of Nishan Ali's party. By the way, I must tell you that I left ten of our men at the point where this track joins the main road up the pass. Don't capture them by mistake."

Dwyre and Jardigne went off with the fifty men who had made the original capture to ambush the remainder of Akbar Ali's gang, while Jayle, Niaz Mahomed and Nishan Ali went off to inspect the loot.

"How do you know that there are only three of Akbar Ali's gang with Mahomed Ali?" Jayle asked Niaz Mahomed as they were moving over to superintend the unloading and stacking of the loot.

Niaz Mahomed told Jayle his original dispositions when he left Nishan Ali to delay Akbar Ali at the south end of the pass.

"Just as I got everything ready," he continued, his eyes flashing with envy, "Nur Bukhsh came to me with Nishan Ali's message, and told me what Akbar Ali's plans were and, incidentally, of my supposed quarrel with Nishan Ali. If I had taken the convoy by ordinary ambush and attack, I did not see, judging from what Nur Bukhsh had told me of the position, how I was to avoid sacrificing Nishan Ali. However, as I knew Mahomed Ali was merely putting stops on the road and was himself going on to the Barachina plain, I decided to rush the stop at the end of the Utra track and drive the animals quietly to Utra. I and four other men hid

close to the point where this track meets the pass, and the rest posted themselves along each side of the track to Utra, to keep the animals on the move, with the exception of ten men who hid within hail of me in case of accidents.

“Mahomed Ali seemed uncertain what to do, and I at first thought he intended to stop there instead of going on to the plain. I was in two minds whether to attack him or not, when he decided to leave only one of his own men and two of ours at this point, and with the remainder he went on towards Barachina. This simplified matters considerably for us, and when Mahomed Ali had got clear away, well out of earshot, it was easy to surprise and overcome this man and to divert most of the animals up the track towards Utra. I let a certain number of the animals go up the pass toward Barachina in order, in the first place, not to arouse Mahomed Ali's suspicions, and, in the second place, to make it easier for our own men, who were still his prisoners, to escape; their guards would have the animals to round up and look after and guard against attack from the direction of Barachina, where Nur Bukhsh told me I was supposed to be.

“In the darkness and confusion they should have had no difficulty in making good their escape.

“As soon as I heard Akbar Ali's men coming I drove all the animals up here, still leaving the ten men I told you about hidden overlooking the track and the pass to watch the proceedings. I hoped that Nishan Ali would persuade Akbar Ali to abandon the loot that had strayed up here. I made use of the story that Nur Bukhsh had told me of

the supposed quarrel between Nishan Ali and myself and, as you know, rescued him and kidnapped his captors by the same *coup*."

While Niaz Mahomed was telling Jayle and Nishan Ali his side of the adventure the loot had been unloaded and arranged for their inspection. It consisted almost entirely of grain and a certain number of country guns, with ammunition; but, to Jayle's disappointment, no agricultural implements. These certainly he could hardly expect, and he realised that the only hope of getting these, which no other Kolari raiders would encumber themselves with, was to make a raid himself on the plains—a course which he had hoped to avoid.

On the whole Jayle was well satisfied with the results of the first raid. Jardigne had of course been recognised as a member of the band from the first, and now this compliment had been extended to Dwyre. But, most important of all, the raid savoured, in his view at least, more of police than dacoit work; and it was Niaz Mahomed's own doing. They had captured from another band of raiders sufficient grain and meat to last themselves and the Purbiah prisoners a considerable time. Though he had not got the agricultural implements he had hoped for, he had got the draught animals for his agricultural schemes, which, in any case, would have to be postponed until the Purbiahs had built the necessary "police stations."

Dwyre and Jardigne returned soon after they had started, while the loot was still being arranged and sorted. They had met the ten men left by Niaz Mahomed at the pass, who had easily captured the

two left by Akbar Ali at this point. These two, as soon as Akbar Ali had gone, had lain down across the road towards the plain and slept, knowing that any animals attempting to stray back over them would wake them up.

The three men who had been taken along by Mahomed Ali had made good their escape in the darkness and confusion of collecting the animals debouching on to the plain from the pass. Being fairly safe from any attempt at recapture, they had stayed on the hills overlooking the plain until they had seen Mahomed Ali move off at dawn towards Hadwani with such of the loot as had reached him. So, as soon as Dwyre and Jardigne met them and heard their story, as there was no advantage to be gained by further pursuit, and neither knew quite what Jayle's plans were, they returned to Utra.

CHAPTER IX

JAYLE MAKES FOR HADWANI

HADWANI village, the village of Akbar Ali, is situated in the hills overlooking the north-east corner of the Barachina plain, at the junction of two spurs jutting out on to the plain. On each side of these spurs run the only practicable routes from the north and north-east on to the plain, and anyone holding this village could command both these routes. Between the two spurs a path leads from the plain up a rocky nullah to the village. The whole hillside had been denuded of cover near the village, both to increase its defensibility and for firewood for the inhabitants.

Jayle already held Utra and Sitoli, which commanded the only practicable routes, except the main pass, from the plains to the south and the hills to the north-west. He and Niaz Mahomed were, of course, working for different ends. He knew it would take time to persuade the old dacoit to become a policeman, and the arguments, if they can be called such, that he had used for Dwyre and Jardigne would be perfectly useless. At the moment he could think of no argument at all likely to persuade Niaz Mahomed, and could only trust to the course of events turning out as much in his favour in the future as they had done in the kid-

napping of Akbar Ali. That was a piece of luck over which Jayle could claim no influence, and which had led Niaz Mahomed, without any persuasion from Jayle, to do exactly what Jayle had been worrying his brain to try and persuade him to do—namely, to make the Kolaris of the regiment, instead of looting themselves, live on the proceeds of the loot of others. But that was merely an isolated instance and not likely to recur. Now Jayle was in a hurry to complete the cordon round the Barachina plain, by gaining possession of Hadwani by some means or other.

The Purbiahs would have to cultivate the Barachina plain, and nothing could be done unless he held all the routes by which any raiders from the hills around could get access to and from the plain, or by which the Purbiahs might attempt to escape. Unless he held all these routes his scheme to cultivate Barachina plain, so far from checking dacoity, would be a direct incentive to raiders. Niaz Mahomed might very soon suspect that they were working towards different ends, when Jayle would find it much more difficult to get Niaz Mahomed to agree to any suggestion he made. Jayle knew that if his schemes for "dacoit police" came to anything both he and Niaz Mahomed would be about as unpopular with the Kolaris outside their own band as they very well could be, which made it all the more important to hold every practicable route on to Barachina plain by which a raiding party of Kolaris could come down, raid the plain, and get clear away again with their loot.

At the same time Jayle could not give Niaz

Mahomed his real reasons for wanting to possess himself of Hadwani, and it was advisable to get possession of it at once, while Akbar Ali and, presumably, most of the fighting men of the village were prisoners in his hands, and before any other band could seize the village and make it their headquarters. That would be absolutely fatal to his schemes. He was certain Niaz Mahomed would not be willing to make what was practically an unprovoked raid against another band of Kolaris in a direction which he would consider no concern of his. Ali Niaz Mahomed's attention was directed to the south; and Utra was an ideal headquarters for raiding the Indian plains, both to the south-east, through the main pass, and to the south-west, by the track from Utra itself to the plains.

"Who is Mahomed Ali?" Jayle asked Niaz Mahomed, when they had settled down to the morning meal together after the latter's all-night wait for Akbar Ali.

"He is Akbar Ali's younger brother, I believe," answered Niaz Mahomed. "But he is a good deal younger than Akbar Ali. I don't remember hearing anything particular about him in the old days. He can't be more than about twenty years of age."

"Akbar Ali must think a good deal of him to have sent him in charge of his advanced party," suggested Jayle.

"I suppose so," said Niaz Mahomed, rather indifferently. "But it doesn't necessarily follow. I don't think much of Nishan Ali, but I left him in charge of the party to delay Akbar Ali."

"You thought enough of Nishan Ali to think

out a clever stratagem to capture the convoy without risk to him when it would have been simpler to attack it in the pass and let him take his chance."

"Oh, that is different," replied Niaz Mahomed. "I would not have attacked the convoy in the dark without knowing its value, but knowing I would lose ten men. Who the ten men were is quite immaterial."

"It may be to you, but not to Mahomed Ali. If Mahomed Ali is anything like Nishan Ali, he will now try and rescue his brother."

"He can't do much with only three men."

"He won't take long to collect more."

"He can't collect enough to do us any harm."

"No; but he might play the same trick on one of our returning raiding parties as you played on Akbar Ali. You made a rather dangerous precedent by doing that. It was unfortunate."

"Yes; but what is done, is done. All the Kolaris will remember that I am a law to myself. Akbar Ali had no love for me before, when we were both raiders, and he was a fool to fall into the trap. A fool, whether he is a Kolari or not, is a legitimate prey for everyone. Perhaps I have done well in what I did. But for this, Akbar Ali, being a fool, would most certainly sooner or later have made a mess of a raid and brought the Kolari into contempt. Now he will never again have a band. No. I did right, and nothing but good has come of it."

"I quite agree with you," answered Jayle, but his meaning was not quite the same as Niaz Mahomed's. "But that doesn't alter the pre-

cedent. The Kolaris will also agree that it is quite a good scheme. They might even be so struck with it as to try it on us.

"Our raiding parties will have to be careful. Anyhow, they will be better armed and better led than Akbar Ali's band. Besides, we can make our raids to the south-west, out of Mamohed Ali's sphere altogether and covered by Utra."

The other shrugged his shoulders.

"Through twenty miles of hills! It would be playing into his hands. His object will be merely revenge, not necessarily to get away with the loot, as we did. Out of sheer revenge he is quite capable of ambushing one of our returning parties and driving the loot back on to the plains, or even ambushing a party on its way to raid the plains. Besides, it may happen that our raiding parties may be followed up from the plains. A good number of the Purbiah mutineers at Meerut have probably deserted with their arms and gone off on their own. One of our raiding parties might bump into a nest of them. Then it would be distinctly uncomfortable to have them behind us and Mahomed Ali, even with only a few men, in front of us. Until he is settled with we dare not run the risks of raiding along the south-west track."

Niaz Mahomed was not satisfied.

"But how do you propose to settle with him?" said he. "We can't go out of our way to attack him now. There's no knowing where it will end. If Mahomed Ali forms a new band, it is certain to contain other influential Kolaris or their relatives, and so it will go on. We shall spend our whole time

fighting other Kolaris, instead of ourselves raiding the plains."

Jayle could not tell Niaz Mahomed that this was exactly what he did want.

"Yes," he said. "If we give Mahomed Ali time to collect a fair-sized band. But if we capture him and the rest of the loot at once, everybody will consider it part of the kidnapping of Akbar Ali. If we act at once, it will not affect the result of your doing that one way or the other. Whether we attack Mahomed Ali or not cannot now make any difference to the results of that."

But Niaz Mahomed, though he had been quite willing on the spur of the moment to take the loot of another raiding party, resolutely declined to go out of his way to do so. He was also getting rather peevish at the way Jayle kept on harping on the fact that the attack on Akbar Ali was his own doing, and Jayle appeared only to give it a very lukewarm approval.

"Mahomed Ali will probably be as loth to fight us as we are him, as long as we leave him alone," Naiz Mahomed replied. "If he can raise a new band, it will be for the purpose of raiding the plains, not fighting other Kolaris. None would join his band for that, especially if they knew it was to fight me. At all events, we can safely leave him to take the first steps."

"That depends on what his first step is going to be and where," promptly asserted the speaker

"What can he do? He can't collect enough men to do us any harm here."

"No; not here. But Salah Mahomed has only

got about thirty men at Sitoli, all more or less damaged. Out of revenge Mahomed Ali might easily make a surprise attack at Sitoli; and if he does it at all, he will do it this afternoon or to-night. If he has any leadership at all—and he certainly seems less of a fool than Akbar Ali—he can rely on a surprise. For that he won't want more than ten men, and he could raise that number, or more, directly he reached Hadwani and tells what he knows about your kidnapping Akbar Ali," argued Jayle.

"How is he to know it was I who was responsible for the kidnapping of Akbar Ali?"

"He knows that it was Nishan Ali's treachery. The men of Nishan Ali's party who were with him have deserted, and Nishan Ali says that Mahomed Ali suspected treachery from the first."

Niaz Mahomed wavered, but was not yet convinced.

"Mahomed Ali daren't do anything," he said. "We have Akbar Ali as a hostage. Even if he does, we can settle with him then. But it probably will not be necessary. Just because of the possibility of his attacking Salah Mahomed at Sitoli, we can't go any further with the feud unless Mahomed Ali chooses to carry it on. The next move lies with him and, as I said before, it will be as much to his disadvantage to continue the feud as ours."

Jayle did not agree.

"He will only think of revenge. He won't think of ulterior advantages or disadvantages, any more than you did yourself when you took

the first step in kidnapping Akbar Ali and his convoy."

"That was unfortunate; but I had either to do that or return empty-handed. But the fact of having started the feud is no reason for continuing it."

"You were not content to let matters rest when Akbar Ali had kidnapped Nishan Ali."

"That was different," said Niaz Mahomed, with a chuckle. "I told Nishan Ali to go and be kidnapped. Mahomed Ali did not tell Akbar Ali to go and be kidnapped."

"Nishan Ali would not be content to let matters rest if Akbar Ali had played this trick on you."

"What Nishan Ali would have done has nothing to do with it."

"Oh, yes, it has," persisted his friend. "From what Nishan Ali would have done we can form some idea of what Mahomed Ali is likely to do."

"Well, what do you think Mahomed Ali is likely to do?"

"He will attack Sitoli this afternoon," said Jayle.

"If he does, we can attack him then."

"You say you will attack him if he attacks Salah Mahomed, and yet you think he won't attack us when we have attacked and kidnapped his own brother, Akbar Ali."

Niaz Mahomed paused to think for a suitable answer to this, but found none. He was tired with his all-night wait for Akbar Ali and, at the best of times, he was no match for Jayle in an argument. He knew Jayle was wrong, and he knew Jayle knew he was wrong. He may even have suspected that

Jayle had some ulterior motive. But the point seemed to him of minor importance compared to the sleep he wanted; and, if he did not entirely acquiesce in Jayle's proposal, he offered no further active opposition.

"I suppose he will try and avenge Akbar Ali if he can," Niaz Mahomed said at last. "You always have persuaded me into wild-cat schemes against my better judgment."

"You can't say you have ever lost in the long run by being persuaded by me," replied Jayle.

"No, but what is it you propose to do?"

"I propose to go out and capture Mahomed Ali and the rest of the convoy before he can collect a band and spread a garbled version of what an out-an-out villain you are."

Niaz Mahomed laughed and reluctantly agreed, but declined to take any active part in the scheme himself. He went off to sulk and sleep in the shade of a rock.

Jayle set about collecting the necessary men, but refused to take either Dwyre or Jardigne with him. These two he left behind to prevent, as far as they could, Niaz Mahomed, in his present mood, from doing anything with Akbar Ali which might upset his plans for the future. The party started off at about eight o'clock in the morning across the Barachina plain with fifty men. On reaching the foothills below Hadwani he divided his men into three parties. Two of these he sent, one up each of the spurs which ran out on to the plain, and the third up the track up the valley east of the village, to get behind the village and cut off escape to the

hills to the north and east. Jayle himself went with the party up the western spur, and reached the vicinity of the village about eleven o'clock, where he halted about three hundred yards from the village, to give the party which had gone up the valley time to get into position.

When he was sure that this party was in position, seeing no movement in the village, Jayle advanced cautiously to within about a hundred and fifty yards of the outskirts and hailed Mahomed Ali by name. A voice answered from the village, asking who he was and what his business was; but no man showed himself. Jayle got back under cover and replied that his business was with Mahomed Ali.

"Mahomed Ali is not in the village," answered the voice.

"Who are you? and where is Mahomed Ali?"

There was no reply.

"Where is Akbar Ali?" asked Jayle, hoping that curiosity would open the mouth of the man in the village, whom he suspected of being Mahomed Ali himself.

"I don't know," answered the voice.

"I do," said Jayle.

"Where is he?"

"At Utra. He is a prisoner with Niaz Mahomed."

"Who are you?"

"Colonel Jayle. I have come from Niaz Mahomed for the rest of the loot."

"Come and take it," said the voice defiantly.

"If I have to take it by force, it is possible some

JAYLE MAKES FOR HADWANI 111

of my men may get hurt. That will not be good for Akbar Ali."

"How will it be good for Akbar Ali if I surrender the rest of the loot now?"

"Akbar will be set free."

"Very well; but how am I to know that this is true? I will hold the village until Akbar Ali is set free."

"You will not."

At this point a burst of musketry was heard from the far side of the village, and a moment afterwards a mob of animals stampeded from the village down the valley between the two spurs, which were already held by Jayle and his other party. Three or four men rushed out after the animals in the attempt to stop the stampede and drive the animals back. Jayle ordered the men with him to withhold their fire until those men were well clear of the protection of the village. But the party on the other spur opened fire when they were only fifty yards from it. They immediately bolted back, but lost two of their number, who were shot down before they could regain the shelter of the outlying huts.

Jayle would have preferred to capture them alive, as he would have done if his other party had not opened fire so soon, in deference to Niaz Mahomed's susceptibilities. Up to this episode no Kolari had lost his life, or even been wounded, as a result of the kidnapping of Akbar Ali and his convoy. Now, however, first blood had been drawn and Jayle was committed to the capture of Hadwani at all costs. First he sent half of the men

on the spot with him to collect the animals in the nullah between the two spurs, and frustrate any attempt the garrison might make either to escape in that direction or to rescue the animals.

The owner of the voice in the village had taken no part in the stampede beyond calling, too late, to the others to come back. But when Jayle again hailed him he did not reply.

"You tried to get the animals away while parleying with me," Jayle shouted at last. "You now see that you are surrounded. As you tried to deceive me, I withdraw my promise to set Akbar Ali free."

Still there was no reply.

"These are now my terms," continued Jayle. "If you attempt to defend the village, Akbar and all his band will be handed over to the villagers whose homes they have looted in the plains. If you surrender at once, I will leave his and your fate at the discretion of Niaz Mahomed. He is a Kolari, and will perhaps be satisfied with having captured the whole loot without the loss of a single man. If you surrender now, I will send you straight to him, and you can negotiate with him for your own and Akbar Ali's release. Which is it to be?"

Still there was no reply.

"Once I open fire I shall not be able to stop, even if I want to," continued Jayle. "Unless you surrender at once, Akbar Ali and all his band, at present prisoners at Utra, and such of you as I capture alive, shall be handed over to the villagers in the plains to torture and kill as they please

For the last time, will you surrender now, or wait until we capture you ? ”

Still there was no reply.

Jayle now ordered his men to be ready to open fire on any who exposed themselves, and signalled to the party on the other spur to advance cautiously towards the village. He had already explained his plan of attack. Each party was to advance alternately about fifty yards at a time, while the other remained in readiness to cover the advance by firing at any defender who showed himself.

“ I will surrender,” called the voice from the village, as soon as the advance from the other spur began.

Jayle signalled to the other party to halt and take cover, but did not reply to the man in the village for about a minute.

“ Come here, unarmed,” Jayle called out at last.

A young man stepped boldly out of a hut on the outskirts of the village and advanced towards Jayle.

“ Is Mahomed Ali in the village ? ” Jayle, eyeing him curiously, asked as he came up.

“ No,” he replied. “ He is here.”

“ Who are you ? ” Jayle asked.

“ I am Mahomed Ali,” was the reply in a firm tone.

Jayle considered a moment before replying.

“ My terms are these,” he said. “ All the men and women and children in the village must collect in the nullah below, unarmed. The old men and women and children shall go free. The men capable of bearing arms shall go to Utra. Those who are not recognised as having taken any part in the

raid on the plains will be allowed to go free. Those who took part in the raid will join Akbar Ali and the other prisoners. Niaz Mahomed can do what he likes with them. When you tell me you have done this, I will send a party through the village with orders to collect the loot and kill anyone they find there. Do it ! ”

The other turned on his heel and returned to the village. While Mahomed Ali was making arrangements for the surrender Jayle passed the time writing a note to Jardigne, to be taken to Utra by the escort returning with the prisoners and the loot.

“ DEAR JARDIGNE,” he wrote,

“ I have, you see, effected the capture of Mahomed Ali, and am sending him and all the able-bodied men of the village to Niaz Mahomed. These were the terms under which he surrendered without defending the village :—I said, if he resisted, Akbar Ali and the whole of his band, together with any prisoners I might take in capturing Hadwani itself, would be handed over bound to the villagers whose homes they had looted, to torture to their hearts’ content ; but if he surrendered at once, Niaz Mahomed would be left to decide the fate of both Akbar Ali and his men and Mahomed Ali himself, without any advice or assistance from me. He preferred the latter course. I have promised not to influence Niaz Mahomed’s decision one way or the other ; so I am staying here, which is what I intended to do from the first, to fortify and hold this village.

"Send me out fifty more Kolaris and at least a hundred Purbiahs, to help build a substantial fort here. I think, too, it would be as well to send all the Purbiahs, not actually required to build the fort at Utra, to Barachina with an adequate escort, and at the same time to get all the loot there. Both can be more easily guarded there than at Utra.

"Dwyre had better come out here to take charge of the building of this fort. As soon as he comes I will come to Barachina and meet you there. You had better go there to superintend the rebuilding of the station, and leave Niaz Mahomed to his own devices at Utra. Try and persuade him before you leave not to do anything too lenient or too severe with regard to Akbar Ali and Mahomed Ali that is likely to interfere with our police plans for the future; but don't do anything to put his back up, or make him suspicious of any ulterior motives on our part.

"Niaz Mahomed ought also to send a few men out to help Salah Mahomed at Sitoli. Once we have strong forts at Utra, Sitoli, and Hadwani, and somewhere on the main pass, we shall be free from any real danger of our agricultural schemes being interfered with.

"I made the capture without any loss to ourselves by a lucky accident. Mahomed Ali tried to get the animals out behind the village while he was parleying with me; but I had sent a party round to prevent this, and they drove the animals back so vigorously that they did not stop in the village, but stampeded right through into my very arms. Not only that, but several of Mahomed

Ali's men followed them and rashly attempted to recover them. They scuttled back as soon as we opened fire, but lost two of their number killed. This has given me an idea which may come in useful when we are running short of ammunition ; but I will explain it later. It is too long to write.

"I have promised not to hamper Niaz Mahomed with my advice, but, if you can do so, try and persuade him to let Akbar Ali and his gang go free, without arms, on the understanding that they will be shot at sight if they come within twenty miles of Barachina. However, there would be no disadvantage in taking any willing and likely recruits from his band ; but use discretion in doing this. They should be treated and trained exactly as our recruits were in the regiment.

"Niaz Mahomed seems inclined now to keep up the military rank held by the N.C.O.'s in the regiment, and the discipline and efficiency ensuing from this. I was afraid he would be rather the reverse, but, if you have the opportunity, point out to him the advantage of military organisation and training for the band of dacoits.

"I had such difficulty in persuading him to agree to my taking Hadwani that I don't propose to force my advice on him myself. But there should be no difficulty in letting him have it through you.

"Mahomed Ali and the other prisoners are ready to start for Utra at last, and I must send this with the escort.

"Yours,
C. F. JAYLE."

JAYLE MAKES FOR HADWANI 117

As soon as this letter was dispatched with the escort taking the prisoners to Utra, Jayle set about fortifying Hadwani. The prisoners consisted of only about a dozen men, all capable of bearing arms. The old men, women and children had all been sent away before he arrived, and it looked as if Mahomed Ali had rather expected the raid, suspecting what had happened to Akbar Ali, or had intended to desert the village and make his headquarters further in the hills, where he would be less likely to clash with Niaz Mahomed. Jayle detached about a dozen men as a covering party two hundred yards along the crest of the ridge north of Hadwani, and with the remainder set about putting the village in a state of defence.

It was as well that he did so, as, within an hour of the prisoners and escort leaving, this covering party opened a brisk fire, which was at once returned from the valley to the east, but out of sight of the village. Jayle took forward half a dozen men, who were armed and equipped ready in case of such an emergency, to reconnoitre, leaving the rest of his men to get armed as quickly as possible and remain in reserve at the village.

When he came up to the covering party, Jayle saw that they were firing at a large party of Kolaris, fifty or sixty strong, who had evidently seen or heard something to arouse their suspicions, and had crept up to within two hundred yards of the covering party before they were seen. At the point where the covering party had taken up their position, a subsidiary ridge ran down eastwards, and this both prevented the attackers seeing the

men in Hadwani village and also prevented these in their turn bringing an effective fire to bear on the attackers to assist the covering party. The attackers were in the valley formed by this subsidiary ridge and the main ridge.

Jayle saw that, if he could get the men from the village on to this ridge, he would have the attackers at his mercy; but the attackers were a good deal nearer the ridge than the village was, and from the village it was necessary to drop down into a bare valley before reaching the ridge. If, while his men were advancing from the village, the attackers got possession of the ridge, all the advantages would lie with them. They could mop up the men advancing from the village and then, at their leisure, deal with the covering party.

Leaving instructions to the covering party to retire the moment fire was opened from the village, Jayle made his way back there unobserved, and got the men there out of sight, but ready to open fire as soon as the attackers appeared on the ridge opposite them. The action beyond the ridge continued furiously for some time, and Jayle saw several men of the covering party fall, killed or wounded; but still there was no sign of any of the attackers appearing on the ridge, where fire could be brought to bear on them from the village. The covering party, with the reinforcements Jayle had taken up at the beginning of the action, consisted of fifteen men, of whom at least five were killed or badly wounded, and Jayle had only fifteen men in the village with him, the remaining twenty of his original fifty having gone off to Utra with the

JAYLE MAKES FOR HADWANI 119

prisoners. As things stood at present he ran the risk of having the covering party wiped out in detail, while those in the village could give them no assistance, if the attackers chose to push home their attack straight up the valley without showing themselves on the subsidiary crest.

The covering party was expending a large amount of ammunition, which could not be replaced, and Jayle was certain that, once he got his whole force safely into Hadwani village, he could hold out without any great expenditure of ammunition until Dwyre brought the reinforcements he had asked for. He sent five men off from the village, under cover of the crest, along the west side of the ridge, with orders, without exposing themselves unless necessary, to give the covering party the assistance of their fire while they retired, and then to make good their retirement to the village by the same route as soon as possible.

Scarcely had the party left when the attackers appeared on the ridge in sight of the village. It was too late to recall them now, as they would be seen re-entering the village, even supposing Jayle could attract their attention without also attracting the attention of the attackers. Without them Jayle would lose a third of his fire effect when he did open fire, but that could not now be helped. For the moment the attackers did not appear to be paying any attention to the village, but began to creep along the spur towards the covering party, but, of course, out of sight of the five men Jayle had sent along the west slope of the ridge to reinforce them.

Jayle waited until these reinforcements were near enough to be able to help carry the wounded of the covering party back to the village, and then opened fire. His volley came as a surprise to the attackers, and, as he hoped, distracted their attention from the covering party to himself at the critical moment. The covering party retired unmolested past the village on the west slope of the ridge, entering it from the south, and rejoining Jayle in time to add materially to the losses of their late opponents, who, partly recovering from their surprise, rushed to the position that the covering party had just vacated without troubling to take cover, apparently in the hope of catching these at a disadvantage as they retired.

The covering party had lost four killed and four severely wounded, exclusive of men slightly wounded but not incapacitated; but they said they had killed at least ten of the attackers and wounded more. This was probably an exaggeration, but no attempt was made to push the attack home to the village. The surprise at being suddenly fired on from an unexpected quarter made the attackers exaggerate the strength of the party holding the village; so things were now at a deadlock. The attackers lined the spur two hundred yards from the village and opened a brisk fire.

Jayle did not waste any more ammunition in replying to this. He wanted his opponents to either attack across the open and get done with it, or else to clear off and leave him to get on with strengthening the village. This seemed such an unconventional method of fighting to the attackers

that they gradually slackened their own fire. While each side held itself in readiness to meet any move of the other, the action became merely a sniping duel, which slowly dwindled away to nothing, as no man on either side exposed himself sufficiently to form a reasonable target.

At about six o'clock in the evening Dwyre reached Hadwani with thirty Kolaris. Jayle now cautiously advanced on to the ridge, on the same principle of mutual support as he had used in his advance to Hadwani village. But, on reaching the ridge, he found it deserted, the enemy having also apparently seen Dwyre's party coming up to reinforce the defenders of the village. They had not dared to risk an attack before Dwyre came up, and it would have been useless for them to remain all night without water on the ridge, where they would run the risk of being attacked during the night by what they must have thought considerably superior force; and, unobserved by Jayle, they had made good their escape back into the hills from which they had come.

As soon as Jayle, finding his opponents had unobtrusively retired, had made his dispositions for the night, he and Dwyre sat down to such supper as they could scrape together. It was not much of a meal, but Jayle wanted to get back to Utra to watch Niaz Mahomed. He asked Dwyre whether Niaz Mahomed had done anything about Akbar Ali and his band up to the time Dwyre had left for Hadwani.

"No," said Dwyre; "we went on building the fort, or police station, as you call it. Niaz Mahomed

did nothing about Akbar, as he had promised to leave that over until your return. I wasn't with him when your chit came in ; I had started building a subsidiary post south of Utra overlooking both the tracks leading east and south-west. Jardigne brought me your chit, and said that Niaz Mahomed had agreed, rather sulkily it seemed. By the time I got back to Utra the men were ready to go with me. I did not see anything of Niaz Mahomed myself. He seemed to be doing the Achilles trick. But, by the way, you made one great mistake. Mahomed Ali was not among the prisoners, as you said in your letter."

Jayle gasped with surprise.

"What ? He couldn't have escaped ! He certainly left here with the escort."

"No. No one escaped after leaving here, according to the escort. But Mahomed Ali apparently is still at large. The man who had been the leader here and, when he surrendered, had said he was Mahomed Ali, was not Mahomed Ali. He apparently said this in the hope that you would not make any further search for Mahomed Ali. Mahomed Ali was not in the village when you came here, but out collecting a band of his own."

Jayle felt he had been tricked.

"Then it was Mahomed Ali who attacked me here this afternoon," said he, disgusted with himself for not having risked moving his men straight on to the ridge, and so effecting the capture of the man who, he was sure, would soon prove a thorn in his side. "What a fool I was not to think of that before ! I could easily have captured him instead of merely confining myself to holding the village

and saving my ammunition. I only hope he knows nothing about Salah Mahomed at Sitoli. But I must go and warn him and Jardigne. Is Jardigne at Barachina ? ”

“ Yes ; he hadn’t started when I left, but said he would be coming along at once, as soon as he could collect all the available Purbiahs to load and carry the loot there.”

“ Get four ponies saddled and bridled from amongst the loot down in the nullah,” said Jayle to a Kolari who was standing by. “ Three men are to come with me to Barachina as soon as possible. Tell me when they are ready. I will leave you here, Dwyre,” he continued as the Kolari went off to carry out his orders. “ If nothing happens during the night, I will send you some Purbiahs to build a police station here, but send them back to Barachina in time to arrive there before dark. Barachina is going to be the central jail.”

“ Right,” answered Dwyre. “ If you nearly captured Mahomed Ali, I don’t suppose he will attack again to-night. How did he manage to escape ? ”

“ I didn’t actually nearly capture him,” explained Jayle. “ What I meant was, that if I had moved the men on to that ridge at once, as I thought of doing, I would have captured him as it turned out. But I thought the risk was too great.”

Dwyre paused before replying. He wanted to know what had happened, as it might affect his action during the night if he were attacked, or if he had a good opportunity of attacking Mahomed

Ali. At the same time he did not wish to appear to criticise Jayle.

"What happened?" Dwyre said at last. "I should have thought you would have run a good deal of risk to capture Mahomed Ali."

"So I would. But in the first place I did not know Mahomed Ali was there. Let us stroll over to the ridge, and I will show you exactly what the position was. We may as well visit the post there anyway before I go."

The two accordingly visited the post, which was in the same position as that originally held by the covering party.

"The covering party was here," continued Jayle. "Mahomed Ali—we will suppose for the sake of argument it was Mahomed Ali—was there. That is the ridge I thought of moving on to from the village. But you see that Mahomed Ali was actually a good deal nearer to it than I was, and I, too, had to drop down into that nullah. The obvious way to attack the covering party here was for Mahomed Ali to come along that very ridge. If, as it was natural to suppose, he did this, he would get on to the ridge while I was still in the open valley below him, and I would lose heavily, and gain nothing. As it turned out, I could easily have got there before him, and then I could have done what I pleased with him."

Dwyre said nothing as the two walked back to the village, but Jayle saw that he disapproved of his over-caution. He realised that the time would come when his own interests would suffer if Dwyre lost confidence in Jayle's tactical soundness.

"Tell me candidly, Dwyre," he said at last ;
"would you have moved the men on to the ridge
at once ?"

"Yes."

"Why ?"

"I don't know It would have seemed to me
the natural thing to do. On your own showing, it
struck you yourself at once as the natural thing to
do. The difference is that I would have done it
without considering the pros and cons. If I had
tried to do that, it would have taken me so long that,
even if I did eventually decide to do it, the oppor-
tunity would have passed long before I had reached
a decision."

"Even supposing Mahomed Ali was the attacker
in this instance, and supposing you had taken the
ridge, and supposing you had captured Mahomed
Ali, Niaz Mahomed would only have released him
again. So I don't think it matters much."

The three men and the ponies were now ready,
and Jayle rode off to Barachina. On arrival there
he found that Jardigne and a hundred Kolaris and
all the Purbiah prisoners had already reached
Barachina and were settling down for the night.
He warned Jardigne to be ready to send thirty
Kolaris to reinforce Dwyre at Hadwani if neces-
sary, and, with thirty more, himself pushed on to
Sitoli. On reaching the hills a mile south-east of
Sitoli he naturally had to move more slowly and
cautiously, but the village was reached at about
ten o'clock that night without any sign of Mahomed
Ali and his men having been in the neighbourhood.

CHAPTER X

THE SETTLEMENT

SITOLI is situated on a spur of the narrow range running between Barachina plain and the Sitapani river. By holding Sitoli, commanding the only route on to the Barachina plain from the west, Jayle was able to control all the tract of country bounded on the west by the Sitapani river, on the south by the Indian plain, and on the north and east by his chain of posts at Sitoli, Hadwani, and in the Barachina pass, supported by his reserves at Barachina and Utra.

The importance of keeping control of the whole of this tract of country lay in the fact that the wives and families of most of his men lived there. If these families had been scattered all over Kolaristan, it would have been impossible for Jayle to carry out his "police" scheme. The Kolari raiders, if the attempt to put a stop to their dacoities met with any success, could at once raise discontent in Jayle's band by worrying the families of his men. But as long as Jayle held the country inhabited by the vast majority of these families this could have little effect; and the men whose families were not in this part of the country could either get them in or leave the band altogether and go to their homes.

It was not necessary, however, to retain a strong post at Sitoli. Attack from that direction was unlikely, and in the event of attack the garrison of Sitoli could be quickly reinforced from Barachina.

On reaching Sitoli, Jayle warned Salah Mahomed of the possibility of attack from Mahomed Ali, and made the necessary dispositions to meet it. The night, however, passed without incident, and the next morning Jayle, leaving fifteen of his men with Salah Mahomed and setting ten more on to building a post on the hill above Sitoli, took the remaining five with him as escort and rode straight to Utra, which he reached about midday.

The majority of Salah Mahomed's own men had recovered sufficiently to be capable of bearing arms for the defence of the village, and the post that was being built on the hill above, besides covering Sitoli itself from attack from the west, overlooked the valley of the Sitapani and acted as a watch-tower from which a good view of the surrounding country could be obtained. With this post held no considerable force could attack Sitoli by day—and no Kolari moved at night if he could help it—without being seen some distance away, and help being sent for by signal from Barachina.

After eating the midday meal with Niaz Mahomed, Jayle found him in a much better temper than he had expected. Niaz Mahomed at once broached the subject of Akbar Ali, and asked Jayle what he thought had better be done with him.

"We must be careful what we do about that," said Jayle. "We must make up our minds what our plans are to be for the future; and, now that

we have Akbar Ali in our power, we must act in such a way that he cannot interfere with those plans, as he will certainly do if he possibly can. So we can't decide what to do with Akbar Ali until we have decided that the plans are with which we are to prevent him interfering. I have thought of a plan which I think you will agree to. Anyhow, it will do no harm to discuss it, and if you can think of a better, we can discuss that. It would be better, now that we are in a strong position, to make the most of it and have some definite object in view."

"Well," said Niaz Mahomed, "let's hear your plan first. I have no definite object in view beyond raiding. If your plan admits of that, well and good."

"We now, as it happens," answered Jayle, "hold both Hadwani and Sitoli. I suggest we build two more substantial forts, one at each end of the Barachina pass. Most of the men of the band live in this corner of Kolaristan, and we can hold the whole of the triangle bounded by the Sitapani on the west, the plains on the south, and our four forts on the north and east. Those of the men who do not come from this triangle we can easily spare if they do not want to throw in their lot entirely with us. Behind these four posts we have a second line in Barachina and Utra. My suggestion is, that we make ourselves into an entirely separate State, with you as king over the whole of this triangle."

"Why not yourself?" Niaz Mahomed asked with a smile.

"Because the advice I shall give you when you are king will be better than the advice you would give me if I were king," answered Jayle without hesitation. "Besides, you are a Kolari, and I am a Feringhi. There would not be the least trouble in your being king; in fact, things would go on exactly as before. As far as the band is concerned, they might accept me as king, though this is by no means certain. But, even if the men we have at present in the band agreed to my being king, the general populace of the district would not. And they must be considered, both as the recruiting ground to keep the band up to strength, and also to co-ordinate raids on the plains. You will control the whole of the plains from the Sitapani river to the Barachina pass, and if the raids over the whole of that tract are organised by one man, it stands to reason that they will be more easily carried out, and also more profitable, than the unorganised and spasmodic efforts of small bands."

"Yes," Niaz Mahomed replied, "I quite agree; it would be a good thing. But you three English would have to have some position."

"You would always have my advice——"

"I'm quite sure I would," Niaz Mahomed interrupted. "I wasn't thinking of you, but of the other two. They will not realise that they have not still got the forces of military discipline behind them. They may ride the high horse and give some order which would be resented; then there would certainly be trouble."

"They will be all right," said Jayle. "I will see to that. In fact, I have told them already. But

did you notice them both in the actual capture of Akbar Ali? They led then and were cheerfully followed. But no position at all is better than one that may be questioned. It would be a mistake to give either of them a definite position. All three of us will be merely your own personal advisers; and, if it comes to fighting, our advice will take the form of action. We are content to rely on anything but an artificial position to ensure our being followed when it comes to action."

"Very well," Niaz Mahomed replied. "That is more your concern than mine. The next point is, how we are going to deal with Akbar Ali in such a way as to further the scheme."

"I don't know about furthering the scheme. The most we can do is, as far as possible, to minimise his power of thwarting it. I think the best procedure is to pretend that you have been king for the last week, and to make such a bounce about your leniency in releasing him after he has made an unprovoked invasion of your territory, that he will overlook your high-handedness in kidnapping him."

Niaz Mahomed was delighted with the idea. Before Jayle could stop him he told a Kolari sitting near to have Akbar Ali brought to him with an escort.

"One moment," said Jayle. "What are you going to do? We haven't decided what to do with him yet."

"Remember your promise," answered Niaz Mahomed. "You said Kolari prisoners would be left to me provided the Purbiahs were left to you

Besides," he added with a chuckle, "I am king. I have been for a week."

Jayle had perforce to acquiesce, and awaited the result of the interview with some misgiving.

When Akbar Ali, looking rather truculent, was brought up to them, Niaz Mahomed moved off to an adjoining empty hut and gave orders that no one but himself and Jayle, Akbar Ali and his escort were to come within earshot. He was afraid lest some of the spectators might spoil the proceedings if he held them in the open out of sheer surprise at the line he intended to take.

"Explain why you made this unprovoked attack on me," said Niaz Mahomed to Akbar Ali, as soon as he had the actors arranged according to his ideas of a royal trial.

"It was you made the unprovoked attack on me," answered Akbar Ali.

"What are you doing here?" Niaz Mahomed asked, feigning astonishment.

"You kidnapped me and kept me here. I am not here of my own free will."

"I kidnapped you within a hundred yards of this spot. What were you doing there?"

"I had followed my loot which you have stolen."

"Your loot? Your loot which you had stolen?"

"Certainly."

"By the same right, it is now my loot."

"Certainly."

"And, because I chose to steal what you had already stolen, you invaded my territory."

"Certainly."

The proceedings were not quite taking the line

Niaz Mahomed wanted. Akbar Ali agreeing monotonously with everything he said afforded him no amusement at all.

"Now that you acknowledge your crime——" began Niaz Mahomed.

"I do not acknowledge that what I did was a crime," said the other hotly. "What I did was perfectly natural."

"It was. Anyone who knew you could foresee exactly what you would do. That was why I sent Nishan Ali to lay the trap for you. But the fact that you are a fool and fell into the trap is no excuse for invading my territory. Not only that," added Niaz Mahomed with a show of anger, "you looted it."

"I? Looted your territory? You must be mad! I took the loot from villagers in the plains."

"Yes. My territory. My territory extends from the Sitapani river to the Barachina pass, and as far on to the plains as I choose to go. I am king of this district."

"King?" said Akbar Ali scornfully. "Who made you a king?"

"Colonel Jayle," said Niaz Mahomed without hesitation.

This upset Jayle's attempt to maintain a proper judicial demeanour, and he could no longer keep a straight face; but Niaz Mahomed did not move a muscle.

"You acknowledge that you have invaded my territory," Niaz Mahomed continued; "that you have looted my subjects; that when I, with perfect right, recapture my own, you follow to the very

gates of my capital ; and the only defence you can offer is a denial of my right to guard my own. Is that so ? ”

All Akbar Ali's truculence had evaporated during this last harangue. He made no reply.

“ Do you deny my right to guard my own ? ”

“ No,” answered Akbar Ali, as Niaz Mahomed appeared to insist on a reply.

“ Do you deny my right to punish those who have stolen my property ? ”

“ No. But at the time I stole the loot I did not know that you claimed it as yours.”

“ That is so. I will bear that in mind. Do you now acknowledge that I alone have the right to raid the plains between the Sitapani river and the Barachina pass ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ You and your men will be given the opportunity to swear never to take part in any raid in that district. Those who are willing to swear this shall go free, but unarmed. Those who will not take this oath will be handed over to the villagers whose homes they have looted. Take him away,” he added to the escort, and Akbar Ali was led away in a state of uncertainty whether himself or Niaz Mahomed was quite mad.

Jayle was almost as surprised as Akbar Ali at the course this interview had taken. Niaz Mahomed was certainly playing into his hands, both by keeping the Kolaris of the regiment together, and also by alienating the Kolaris outside his “ kingdom ” by arrogating to himself the sole right of looting the most profitable part of the plains. He had no

doubt that Akbar Ali would accept the terms offered, and that the result would be a determined opposition to Niaz Mahomed from the rest of Kolaristan.

Having got so far with his scheme, he was not at all sure that absolute isolation from the rest of Kolaristan was what he wanted. In fact, the course of events had been so favourable to his "police" schemes as to be getting rather ahead of him. He and his men would have to live somehow until the Purbiahs' agricultural efforts could produce enough to keep that part of Kolaristan. To expect the Kolaris to take up agricultural pursuits was out of the question. In any case, it seemed that at least one raid on to the plains would be necessary to provide the necessary agricultural implements for the Purbiahs—unless he could persuade Niaz Mahomed to attempt to get them peaceably, by exchanging such of the loot as they did not require for the ploughs and other things that they did require. Now, while Niaz Mahomed was suffering from the initial conceit of royalty, was the best opportunity he could expect to get him to agree to protecting instead of raiding the plains. Before he could broach the subject, however, Nishan Ali came into the hut and said that Akbar Ali had accepted the terms.

"Now," said Niaz Mahomed, "we have to consider the defences of the frontiers of my kingdom. You said something about two forts, one at each end of the Barachina pass. Where?"

"It is too late to go out there now," answered Jayle. "In any case it would be better to let

Akbar Ali and his men get clear away first. If then we find them spying, they will have broken their oath, and can be dealt with accordingly. Nishan Ali and I can do that to-morrow. But there is one other important thing that I want to discuss with you. We must keep the Purbiahs employed. If they are idle, they are certain to give trouble. After we have finished building these forts, what are we to do with them ? ”

“ Kill them,” answered Niaz Mahomed, taking the line of least resistance. It was to him the easiest way out of the difficulty.

“ I don’t want to do that,” said Jayle with a smile. “ They may still be useful.”

“ Well, do anything you like. They are your children. It is nothing to do with me.”

“ I think it would be as well to make them cultivate the Barachina plain. It would keep them out of mischief, and also may be useful to us. They will at least keep themselves in food without our having to worry about that.”

“ Yes,” said Niaz Mahomed indifferently.

“ For that they will want ploughs and things.”

Niaz Mahomed gave Jayle a questioning, almost suspicious, look, but said nothing. He was beginning to be a little suspicious of ulterior motives on Jayle’s part. Jayle, of late, had not been acting quite as he had done in the old days, and Niaz Mahomed thought that his hand had been forced more than once.

“ There’s a lot of that stuff we don’t want,” continued Jayle, pointing to the loot which had been taken from Akbar Ali, when he saw that Niaz Mahomed was not going to offer any suggestion

from which he could lead him to make the suggestion he wanted. "We may as well exchange what we don't want for the ploughs and things that we do."

"There is no hurry," answered Niaz Mahomed. "The Purbiahs have got to build the forts yet. Then, if you like, you can keep them occupied in digging wells. By the time ploughs are wanted we shall have been able to collect plenty from our ordinary raids on the plains. Only we must remember we want ploughs, otherwise nobody would burden themselves with loot like that."

Jayle had to agree. It was no use pressing the point, and he saw that Niaz Mahomed was beginning to get a little suspicious.

The next morning Jayle suggested that Niaz Mahomed should join Jardigne at Barachina and tell him the present position and what had been done with Akbar Ali and his gang, while Jayle himself went with Nishan Ali to decide on the sites for the two forts covering the ends of the Barachina pass. Jardigne and Niaz Mahomed got on very well together, and Jayle was certain that Jardigne understood and thoroughly agreed with his proposed scheme of "dacoit police," which had so quickly and unexpectedly been swallowed by Niaz Mahomed.

At the same time, Jayle considered it best, having obtained Niaz Mahomed's unwitting acquiescence in the main scheme—he could salve his conscience, never a difficult process with Jayle, for the one raid proposed by the fact that it was to produce ploughs for his agricultural schemes—to

keep out of direct contact with him for a short time; and, for the present at any rate, that Dwyre and Niaz Mahomed should meet as little as possible.

The position of the proposed forts to cover the pass where it debouched on to the Indian plain made the building of them by the Purbiah prisoners impossible. Escape on to the plains would be too easy for them, and more Kolaris would have to be employed in guarding the prisoners than would be necessary if they themselves built those forts. A further consideration was that Akbar Ali might even now give trouble, and in case of an engagement with another band of Kolaris, escape would be still easier for the Purbiahs.

The Kolaris at first did not relish the idea of themselves building the forts, but Niaz Mahomed had not much difficulty in explaining to them the absolute necessity of such a step.

"I think," Niaz Mahomed said to Jayle, when he had persuaded the Kolaris to build both these forts, "Nishan Ali had better go with you."

"Yes," answered Jayle, "anybody can be left in charge here."

"And," continued Niaz Mahomed, "when you have selected the sites for the forts, it would be better if you left Nishan Ali in charge to build them. You must come back to Barachina. That will be a better headquarters than this."

Jayle quite agreed with Niaz Mahomed's idea that the work on the forts would progress under Nishan Ali all the better for his own absence.

"I won't argue with Your Majesty," said Jayle

with a smile ; " but when I have selected the sites for the forts, I think it would be better for me to go to Hadwani to see how Dwyre Sahib is getting on with his fort. I will come in to Barachina to-morrow."

Niaz Mahomed agreed to this and rode off to Barachina, while Jayle and Nishan Ali took their party off to the mouth of the pass, leaving thirty men to hold Utra.

When Niaz Mahomed reached Barachina he found Jardigne busily engaged in repairing the damage done by the mutiny and rebuilding the lines. He had already made a wire enclosure, in which the Purbiah prisoners were to be herded at night, in the middle of the parade ground. Niaz Mahomed rode up to him and told him what had happened at Utra since he left ; and that he himself, Niaz Mahomed, was now " king " of that part of Kolaristan, and that the British officers were in the unofficial position of general advisers. Jardigne, beyond a half-humorous, half-serious congratulation, said nothing ; but he wondered how Jayle had so quickly persuaded Niaz Mahomed to play up to his scheme of dacoit police. But the means, as far as he was concerned, were of no consequence compared to the result, which was that the Kolari companies of the regiment would remain together as an organised body, that the British officers who had survived the mutiny would also remain part of that body, and that Niaz Mahomed seemed to be pledged, whether he realised it or not, to a course of action as law-abiding as it was possible to expect of a Kolari under the circum-

stances. Though Jardigne said nothing, Niaz Mahomed could see that he was honestly pleased, and was himself correspondingly flattered.

Jardigne did not like to question Niaz Mahomed further in case it might lead him into saying something that might upset Jayle's plans. That some change had taken place in the position since he last saw Jayle was obvious, so he decided to ride out at once and find out from Jayle himself what this change was; more especially as he was naturally curious to learn what Jayle's scheme was for replenishing ammunition, which he had hinted at in the note he wrote from Hadwani.

Jardigne met Jayle at the head of the pass, and the two rode towards Hadwani. Jardigne reminded him of his remark in the note he had sent from Hadwani, and Jayle then related how, just before the surrender of Hadwani, the animals had stampeded towards his own position, and the defenders of the village had rushed out and tried to recover them and been shot down.

"Probably," continued Jayle, "there are roving bands of mutineers on the plains quite close to the mouth of the pass. They have Government muskets and ammunition. My idea is this. They will probably graze their animals somewhere near the mouth of the pass. If they don't, we must await our opportunity till they do. Then it will be quite a simple thing to stampede a few of these animals up the pass. It won't be necessary to take many; only enough to encourage the men guarding them to follow them up the pass. Inside the pass we will have a strong ambush laid, and they will

blunder straight into it and get shot down, just as the men from Hadwani were, when there wasn't even an ambush. This will mean that we shall incur practically no risk ourselves, with a practical certainty of getting their ammunition, to say nothing of the muskets, without their having the chance of expending any of it. What do you think of that ? ”

Jardigne laughed. “ I think it is rather taking it for granted that they will be idiots,” he said. “ Nobody but an idiot would go blundering up the pass into an ambush for the sake of a few camels. In any case they would be bound to take the ordinary precautions.”

“ Oh, no, they wouldn't. What would be the good of following up the camels, presuming the animals were camels, going as hard as they could be driven, if the men following them up the pass, presumably with the object of recovering them, crept cautiously up the pass at about a third of the pace the camels were going at ? When would they catch them up ? Why, even the Purbiah knows that the further they got into the pass, the more difficult it would be for them to get out again, with or without the camels. It is certainly quite possible that, when they found themselves involved in the pass, they might get a bit nervous ; but it will be too late then. The ambush will be quite close to the mouth of the pass ; in fact, only just far enough up the pass to enable us to strip the dead of their ammunition before there would be any chance of interference from help coming up from the plains.”

"I don't think anyone but an idiot would come up the pass at all like that, just in the hope of recovering a few camels. It must be obvious to the meanest intellect that the very meagre chance of recovering a few camels is not worth the risks incurred by blundering up a défile like the mouth of the pass to practically certain death."

"That is, supposing they stop to consider. The men guarding the camels won't. It will be the natural thing to do when they see their camels being taken off by a few men. Only two or three men, disguised and unarmed, would be necessary to stampede the few camels required."

"But the instinct of self-preservation would prevent their doing that."

"You forget that we are talking about rebel sepoys. Their instinct of self-preservation will have been dulled by their military training."

"Rebel sepoys would probably have lost their discipline and all their other military attributes directly they mutinied. If anything, their instinct of self-preservation would be above the normal, as a kind of reaction. Especially in the case of any mutineers that would be on the plains about here. They will not only have been false to ourselves, but to their fellow-mutineers as well. One can only judge of mutineers as a whole by the specimens we have here."

"Well, even if they don't come blundering up the pass, we will certainly be no worse off than we were before. We shall be a certain number of camels to the good, and also it will raise the morale of our men and lower that of the Purbiahs. They

certainly might come cautiously up the pass a short way, just to make a show of sorts. But, however cautiously they came, they would probably still fall into the ambush. Mind you, our men know the ground perfectly, and we can take as long as we like perfecting our arrangements ; and they don't know the ground at all. If you like, you can take a few men and come up the pass as cautiously as you like, and, after three or four dress rehearsals, I can lay the ambush so that they are bound to lose a good number, whatever way they come up."

"You say they might possibly come a short way up ; personally I don't think they would even do that."

"What do you think they would do ?"

"Nothing. They would just grin and bear the loss of two or three camels, and take jolly good care to guard them better in future. Besides, they could easily replace the lost camels by stealing others from someone else."

"Possibly, if the actual owner of the camels was guarding them. But if, as is practically certain, an understrapper is in command of the party guarding them, what would the owner say when the fellow came and reported that a certain number of camels had been stolen and taken off into the hills ?"

"If he had any sense, the fellow would say why he didn't follow them up before the owner had a chance of saying anything."

"*Qui s'excuse, s'accuse.* Whatever excuse he might give, the owner, especially as he will probably

be a senior native officer with a long military training, will ask him what steps he took to recover the camels."

"Well, he'd say he took greater care of the ones that were left and, if necessary, again explain why he didn't follow the stolen camels into the unknown hills."

"The owner of the camels would be biased. In the first place, he would probably shoot the other without giving him a chance of making any excuses at all. If he didn't do that, still he would not listen to any explanations. Anyhow, here is Dwyre. Don't say anything about this ; but I will set him a similar problem and we'll see what he would do."

The two had practically reached Hadwani, and Dwyre had ridden down to meet them. The three rode up to Hadwani and dismounted, when Jayle noticed about half a dozen ponies grazing in the valley below, apparently unguarded.

"By the way, Dwyre," Jayle said, "suppose for the sake of argument three or four Kolaris were to swoop down from the hills opposite us and take those ponies off up the nullah into the hills, what would you do ?"

"Go and get them back, of course," answered Dwyre. "I've got fifty men over and above what would be necessary to guard the Purbiahs here."

Jayle then told Dwyre of his proposed ambush under similar circumstances, as he had already explained to Jardigne. Then, turning to Jardigne, he said : "Perhaps you will acknowledge now that the scheme is anyhow worth trying. We can lose nothing by it, and we stand to gain a good deal.

You see from what Dwyre said that to come blundering up the pass is the natural thing to expect the Purbiahs to do. Of course, I started by telling you all about the ambush, instead of asking you what you would yourself do, as I did Dwyre. If I had done so, I wouldn't mind taking a small bet that your answer would have been the same as Dwyre's."

"Honestly, I don't think so," answered Jar-digne. "I might under the circumstances have done wrong and blundered into your ambush. But I still maintain that to do so would be wrong. The proper course under the circumstances is to do nothing, and I think it is a mistake to start by presuming that the enemy will make a tactical error."

"Someone, I don't know who, has said that the one unpardonable sin in the army is to do nothing," answered Jayle. "It requires more moral courage than you think to do nothing when you are practically certain you will be blamed. As a matter of fact, I think nine hundred men out of a thousand would follow the camels blindly up the nullah. And, of the hundred that wouldn't, ninety-nine would, as I said before, make some sort of a show by moving cautiously up the pass, not so much in the hope of recovering the camels as with the object of saving their own faces by being able to show that they had done something anyway."

"But if the camels were properly guarded, they couldn't be stampeded."

"No, of course not. The whole thing depends on slackness in guarding the camels while grazing.

But the Purbiahs won't expect anything, and one can safely presume that by careful watching we will get our opportunity."

"I don't mean that. I mean that the fault will lie with the man in charge of the camels for carelessness in guarding them. You say that when he has had two or three stolen he would do something to save his face."

"Not exactly. Whatever his real reasons might be for making some sort of a show, he would say he did it for the sake of the morale of his men."

"A fat lot of good it would do to the morale of his men to lead them into an ambush."

Jayle laughed. "I'm not saying he would be right. In fact, I think he would be wrong. That makes no difference to my contention that, of the hundred men in a thousand that would foresee the possibility of an ambush, ninety-nine would not have the moral courage to do nothing."

"In other words, they would risk the lives of their men for no other purpose than to save their own faces and disguise their own original carelessness?"

Jayle shrugged his shoulders. "Ninety-nine men out of a hundred do that," he said. Jayle was a cynic.

CHAPTER XI

THE BITER BIT

THE next morning the three started off towards Barachina, a distance of only five miles. When they had covered about half this distance, Jardigne suddenly stopped and listened. The others did the same, and then they all distinctly heard the sound of musketry fire from the direction of the pass.

"It hasn't taken long," said Jayle. "However, I don't suppose they are in very great strength. Nishan Ali has got about fifty men with him, and is probably holding out in his half-finished fort. Jardigne, will you go and tell him to retire slowly up the pass, enticing them after him, and hold this end of it. I will go on to Barachina. A third of the available force there I will send to reinforce you at the head of the pass. A third I will take myself to Utra. A third will remain with Niaz Mahomed at Barachina in case of emergencies."

Then he turned to Dwyre.

"Dwyre, will you ride back to Hadwani and see that the garrison there does not join in this battle? Get the Purbiahs collected and properly guarded in the village, and keep the Kolaris not absolutely necessary to hold the village and guard the Purbiahs as a striking force ready to move in any

direction required. I believe the enemy on this occasion are Purbiahs ; in fact, I rather expected it, though not quite so soon. But I may be mistaken, and it may be Akbar Ali on the warpath again. In that case you must simply hold Hadwani, as the attack on the pass is probably only a feint, and the main effort will be made against you at Hadwani. If so, and you want help, send in to Niaz Mahomed at Barachina."

Dwyre rode off immediately.

"It is eight o'clock now," Jayle continued, now addressing Jardigne, when Dwyre had ridden off. "I shall reach Utra with my men before midday. By twelve o'clock I want you to have retired past the path that leads from Utra on to the pass, and also to have enticed the enemy, whoever he may be, beyond that path too. Hold the head of the pass, where you will meet the reinforcements I will send you from Barachina. But don't make such a show of strength as to dissuade the Purbiahs from attacking you. Keep their attention occupied. At exactly twelve o'clock I shall leave Utra, force my way into the pass, and get between them and the plains.

"With any luck," he went on, "we ought to collect quite a lot of muskets and ammunition, if they really are Purbiah mutineers ; to say nothing of the possibility of adding a good number of Purbiahs to our present prisoners. So capture rather than kill, if you can. If, by any chance, we happen to capture any of the main leaders, so much the better. At the end of this mutiny it will help us out with the authorities if we can produce amongst

our prisoners any actual ringleaders of the Meerut mutiny."

Jardigne rode off towards the sound of the firing, while Jayle continued on his way to Barachina.

When Dwyre reached Hadwani he found the Kolaris there in a considerable state of excitement, but he managed to allay that by telling them that Jayle Sahib wanted them to hold the village, as it was probable that the attack on the pass was only a feint to draw their attention from Hadwani, where the main attack would be made. The Kolaris, or at least those of them at Hadwani, had lost their distrust for Dwyre and, as he obviously had just come from Jayle, they consented to carry out his instructions and remain at Hadwani ready for anything that might turn up on that side.

Jardigne rode hard for the pass and down it. As he drew nearer to where he presumed the forts would be sited the volume of the fire seemed to increase every minute, and it was obvious to him that the enemy were in greater strength than Jayle had supposed. He was at first afraid that Nishan Ali might have allowed himself to be surrounded; but, about half a mile from the south end of the pass, he met a party of Kolaris retiring. Jardigne dismounted, and let his pony go. She galloped off back up the pass, while Jardigne attached himself to this party. He placed them in a position to cover the retirement of those in front, and asked them where Nishan Ali was.

"Nishan Ali was still holding the half-finished forts," said they, and that one party "already held

a position about a quarter of a mile further down the pass to cover his retirement, and that they had been told to hold a position here to cover the retirement of this party."

This seemed a perfectly sound arrangement to Jardigne, so he left this party ready in position and went forward to find the second party and Nishan Ali. Before he reached the second party, however, he met Nishan Ali, who had retired through them, intending to take up a position covering the retirement of the party Jardigne had just left. So Jardigne accompanied him back, and, when they had chosen the new position and got the men posted, Jardigne explained to Nishan Ali Jayle's plan of action. At the same time Nishan Ali told Jardigne that the enemy consisted of about three hundred Purbiahs in uniform, armed with Government muskets. Nishan Ali had had about seventy men with him at the beginning of the action, but had lost a considerable number round the forts, as he had delayed retiring in the expectation of receiving reinforcements. Jardigne sent a man straight to Utra to tell Jayle that Nishan Ali reported that the enemy were Purbiahs, about three hundred strong.

"Either you or I ought to go back and choose the next position," Jardigne said to Nishan Ali when he had done this. "The present plan of each party having to go back and take up the first position that seems suitable results in a good deal of time being wasted, and also perhaps in the best position not being at once spotted. It is half-past nine now, and we must retire a good deal quicker

than we are doing at present in order to reach the head of the pass by twelve o'clock, as Jayle Sahib wants us to.

"In case we can't, I wrote in my note to Jayle Sahib that 'I would send another man as soon as I pass the Utra path,' and asked him not to move from Utra until this messenger comes. The speed of the retirement will have to be increased gradually in order to entice the enemy past the Utra path; and I suggest you should go back and choose the various positions for the rearmost party, while I stay with whatever party is the middle one, and give the signal for the party in actual contact with the Purbiahs when to retire.

"That will," he proceeded, "enable me to regulate the speed of the retirement to fit in with Jayle Sahib's plans, and it will also prevent any possibility of the party in actual contact with the enemy retiring before the next party is ready to cover them. This will certainly be necessary as the speed of the retirement increases."

Nishan Ali agreed and, as the Kolaris never let the Purbiahs come within dangerous distance, and the Purbiahs appeared to be quite content to let the Kolaris retire at their own pace and made no attempt to push their attack home, neither side had many casualties during the Kolaris' retirement to the head of the pass. In fact, the Purbiahs advanced so cautiously that Jardigne was afraid they would not attack at all when he made his serious stand at the head of the pass, and that he would have difficulty in holding them above the Utra path until Jayle could attack them in rear

To encourage them past the critical point, therefore, he retired slowly as far as the Utra path and, when he had sent word to Jayle telling him what the position was, from that point to the head of the pass he retired more quickly.

On arrival at the head of the pass he found a reinforcement of a hundred men awaiting him, with his pony. Nishan Ali had posted fifty of these to hold the head of the pass, and, under cover of these, was collecting his own men, dealing with the wounded, and counting up his losses, which had been rather heavy. The Purbiahs evidently expected that a stand would be made here, but still showed no inclination to press their attack home. Jardigne tried the ruse of retiring half of his men as conspicuously as possible, but even this did not persuade the Purbiahs to press their attack any more vigorously.

They evidently hoped the Kolaris would retire of their own accord, as they had done up to that point. Jardigne was loth to disappoint them, so he called the whole of his reserves up just behind the crest, out of sight of the Purbiahs, and passed word along to the men holding the crest to be ready to retire, but only just out of sight of the Purbiahs. He then waited anxiously for sounds of firing from down the pass.

He had not long to wait. He had hardly completed his arrangements for this final ruse when the Purbiahs suddenly stopped firing, and he heard the sound of heavy firing from down the pass and knew that Jayle had come into action. The Purbiahs at once commenced to draw off. Jardigne

gave the signal to retire and waited with his whole force just below the crest, ready to advance, give the Purbiahs a volley and charge as soon as he heard them scrambling up the far side of the hill.

This time his ruse was successful. His retirement was so exactly the opposite of what they expected that the Purbiahs at once paused. Then about fifty of them, apparently without any orders, advanced. Escape appeared impossible where they were, between two fires, and the only chance of making good their escape seemed to be to disperse this seemingly small party, which would be hanging about their rear as they retired down the pass, before tackling the larger party that had apparently got between themselves and the plains. Whatever may have been the reason, the result was that about fifty Purbiahs advanced on to the position Jardigne had just vacated, about fifty more stood irresolute, and the remainder fled down the pass.

Jardigne waited until he heard the Purbiahs scrambling up the far side of the hill and, when he judged that the leaders must be nearing the crest, advanced. The volley killed or disabled half of the Purbiahs, and the remainder threw down their arms and fled, closely pursued by the Kolaris, and at the same time masking the fire of those behind them.

When Jardigne reached the crest, he halted and reformed as many Kolaris as he could stop, and kept them in hand as a reserve. The remainder of the Kolaris were carried forward by their own impetus on to the fifty Purbiahs who had stood

irresolute, and a hand-to-hand fight ensued. Jardigne took his reformed reserve into this, and the Purbiahs who had survived the first charge threw down their arms; but the delay had given the Purbiah main body time to organise a rearguard, and so check the rout.

The Kolaris, in this last episode, had lost remarkably little, and they had killed or captured about a hundred Purbiahs; and, what was equally important, secured as many muskets and a good quantity of ammunition. Jardigne was satisfied with this and, as Nishan Ali's men had borne the brunt of the earlier part of the day, he left them and twenty of the reinforcements to collect the wounded, prisoners, muskets and ammunition, and get them safely back to Barachina. This left him with only about seventy men, and there seemed no point in pushing the Purbiahs too hard, as they were already caught between two fires. He contented himself with keeping in touch with the Purbiah rearguard, expecting every moment that their main body would meet Jayle's force, and that the Purbiahs would either surrender or make a desperate attempt to break outwards into the hills to the east and west of the pass, or even through his small force.

As he got nearer and nearer to the Utra path, however, and still the enemy kept on retiring slowly and in good order, he noticed that the firing seemed to be coming from the hills to the west of the pass, instead of in the pass itself. Then, when he came in sight of the path, he saw that the hills covering it were held by Purbiahs, who were only

just then beginning to retire, and that the Purbiahs who had been opposed to him had already retired beyond the danger point. It was useless with his small force to press after them and run the risk of getting wedged in between their main body, which had already retired beyond the path, and this flank guard, which would now become the Purbiah rearguard. All he could do was to stand by and harass this rearguard as it retired practically across his front, in the hope that doing so might give Jayle an opportunity of cutting it up. He inflicted a certain amount of loss, but the Purbiahs were well handled and, for plainsmen, carried out their retirement remarkably skilfully, so that with his small force, already tired with the heat, he could do nothing decisive.

Jayle did not advance his men at once, but came down himself with a small party and joined Jardigne, to find out how he had fared and also to discuss the situation. It was after three o'clock, their men were tired, and the heat was at its greatest. Seeing Jayle coming, evidently to meet him, Jardigne sent his men to keep in touch with the Purbiahs, but not to get seriously engaged, and himself went up to meet Jayle.

Jayle had ridden to Barachina after parting with Dwyre and Jardigne and found that no one there had noticed the sound of firing. In fact, it could only just be heard by listening carefully. Jayle told Niaz Mahomed what he intended to do, and Niaz Mahomed, rather against his will, agreed to stay behind and collect the Purbiahs in their lines, to economise guards, and send all available men

as reinforcements to Utra and the head of the pass, but keeping a sufficient reserve at Barachina for eventualities.

Then Jayle rode on to Utra, and only got there just in time to prevent the garrison there moving off prematurely to reinforce Nishan Ali. He explained to the Kolari in command there that "strong reinforcements had been sent already from Barachina to support Nishan Ali, and they could, if they chose, easily repulse the attack. But to do so would merely mean that they would be constantly worried by these little raids from the plains. It was their *haq* * to raid the plains, not *vice versa*. However, Jardigne Sahib had gone there with reinforcements, and he was going to draw the enemy on to the head of the pass. More reinforcements were coming to Utra, and then they would go straight into the pass behind the enemy, and cut them off from the plains."

This explanation more than satisfied the garrison at Utra, and as soon as he had finished his harangue Jayle received Jardigne's first message, to the effect that the enemy were three hundred Purbiahs in uniform, and told the leading Kolaris of its purport.

Shortly after this the reinforcement of a hundred men reached Utra and reported that a similar number had gone to the head of the pass to meet Jardigne there; and, on receipt of Jardigne's second message that he had reached the Utra path, Jayle advanced, leaving a garrison of only thirty men at Utra, with orders to watch the path that led from Utra direct to the plains, up which it was

*Right, perquisite.

possible, if they were aware of its existence, for a small party of the enemy to advance on Utra and Barachina; and if, as Jayle supposed, it was an escaped Purbiah who had brought this about, it was just possible he was aware of the existence of this route up from the plains. But even so the enemy would merely know of its existence; and, if any did come up that way, it was so much longer that Jayle would have ample time to deal with the force in the pass first and then return to deal with this other force at Utra, when, knowing the country and the enemy being hopelessly at sea, there would be no difficulty in dealing with them as decisively as with those in the pass.

Jayle's advanced guard got in touch with the enemy half a mile west of the pass. Thinking that it was only a weak flank guard, he pushed his attack vigorously, and by superior numbers drove the Purbiahs back slowly for about a quarter of a mile. Then he found that the position that actually overlooked the pass was already strongly held by the Purbiahs, and he realised that to force his way in to the pass would cost him more in casualties than the chance, and results, of success warranted. The numbers of the enemy directly opposed to him were now almost equal to his own, and the time it would take to drive them back would give the men engaged with Jardigne ample time to retire behind this covering force.

So Jayle had to content himself with merely holding this force, and sent a message to Jardigne telling him to "hold the enemy as long as possible in his present position, and trust to doing him as

much damage as possible during his retirement down the pass. The longer they held the Purbiahs to their present positions, the more of their retirement through the pass they would have to carry out in the dark."

This message never reached Jardigne, as it was at the moment Jayle had come into action that he had made his charge, and at the time the message was sent he was almost opposite to Jayle in the pass.

Jayle soon noticed that the Purbiahs opposed to him were beginning to retire, and he pressed his attack more vigorously and finally took the position; but too late to cut off the Purbiahs opposed to Jardigne.

It did not take Jayle long to explain to Jardigne how he had failed to intercept the Purbiahs.

They moved their men as fast as they could down the pass, but the Purbiahs were too quick for them, and managed to get clear of the pass without serious loss before four o'clock in the afternoon. The Kolaris also by this time had had as much as they wanted, and Jayle, after discussing the situation with Jardigne and the leading Kolaris, decided to put out outposts before dark and bivouac where he was.

Most of the Kolaris carried a little food, and those that had none Jayle sent back to Utra, with orders to bring rations out for the others to reach the mouth of the pass by dawn.

As soon as the two British officers had satisfied themselves that the arrangements for protection were adequate and that the Kolaris had made

themselves as comfortable as circumstances permitted, they settled down to a frugal meal themselves, and Jardigne told Jayle his part of the story. Jayle had himself lost pretty considerably in men and achieved nothing very important, so he was all the more pleased to hear of Jardigne's success.

The next morning they awoke at sunrise, to find that the Kolaris had already prepared a good meal and were making ready to move back to Barachina. Leaving fifty men to complete the forts, which the Purbiahs had not troubled to damage, Jayle and Jardigne rode off to Barachina, which they reached before it became excessively hot.

CHAPTER XII

MEERUT—AND THE MUTINY

BEFORE the mutiny broke out at Meerut there was one company of an Indian regiment commanded by one Subedar Abbas Ali, a Rohilla. This company consisted of a few Rohillas and the remainder Purbiah Rajputs. Abbas Ali was superior to the average Indian of his time in education and common sense, and he realised that, however the intended mutiny might go at first, the British could not be driven out of India at one blow; and in a prolonged struggle they were more likely than not to be successful, owing to the inevitable distrust between the Hindus and the Mahomedans.

Major Vaughan was in command of the wing, and he and Abbas Ali had served together in the Sikh wars. Vaughan, then a Captain, had been responsible for Abbas Ali's promotion to Jemadar from Naik, and a certain amount of intimacy had sprung up from that time between the two; on Vaughan's side as he naturally wished his protégé to be a credit to him, and on Abbas Ali's side out of a sense of gratitude more common, perhaps because instances of it were more conspicuous, than at a later date.

It must not, however, be supposed that Abbas

Ali, on the strength either of his gratitude to Vaughan or of his conviction that the British must win in the end, intended to remain loyal to his salt. His gratitude to Vaughan was personal, and only extended to the point of seeing that Vaughan personally came to no harm if he, Abbas Ali, could prevent it without undue risk to himself. His conviction that the British must win in the end did not over-ride his equally certain conviction that they would be badly mauled at the beginning, and he had no intention of taking an active part then if he could possibly help it—and, in any case, not on the side of the British. So, in order to save Vaughan when the mutiny broke out, he asked him to go to his own village on a shooting expedition, offering to accompany him and see that he got good sport.

Vaughan told him that the weather was too hot for a lengthy shoot; but that he would like a week-end shoot if Abbas Ali could come out that evening. Abbas Ali said he would come out and see that the sahib was properly looked after, but would have to return at once, as he was on duty the following day. He had not expected Vaughan to go out quite so soon, but had hoped for time to make a proper *band-o-bast*.*

This did not suit Abbas Ali's plans at all. He had already persuaded two or three hundred men to join in the mutiny at Meerut when it broke out; but then, instead of going on to Delhi, as was the intention of the mutineers, to go off with him in the other direction. That had been his intention

*Arrangements.

from the first, and by this plan he hoped to avoid coming into direct contact with the British. With Oriental logic he regarded abstention from taking an active part in the mutiny as taking an active part in suppressing it.

The mutiny was not due to take place for some time. Abbas Ali did not himself know the exact date, but was fairly confident that at least two days' notice would be given, at any rate to the ring-leaders and native officers. So, as Vaughan was only going out for a couple of days, and there was no probability of his getting leave again so soon after this shoot, it was practically certain that Vaughan would not be out of Meerut when the mutiny did break out.

Vaughan's intention of going away now only for two days, with the excuse—feeble in Vaughan's particular case—that the weather was too hot for sport, set Abbas Ali seriously to think. For Vaughan's sake as well as his own, he wanted both to be out of Meerut when the mutiny broke out. His men were to join him at his village (where he had gradually been collecting a large quantity of stores and ammunition) as soon as possible after the mutiny had broken out and was assured of success, at Meerut at least. The thought struck him that it was possible that the real reason for Vaughan's not going away for more than a couple of days was that the British knew of, and were prepared for, the mutiny.

Abbas Ali did not wish the mutiny at Meerut to be an immediate failure. He intended to use the resulting chaos to suit his own ends, as leader of a

strong and well-armed band of dacoits, choosing his own time later, when the tide began to turn, to declare himself a loyal and active supporter of the British Raj, who had unfortunately, in his efforts to quell the mutiny at Meerut, been unsuccessful and forced into retirement until a more suitable opportunity of openly declaring his loyalty occurred. In any case Abbas Ali intended to feather his own nest and, at the right moment, emerge a strong supporter of the winning side.

So, early on the afternoon of Friday, the 8th of May, Vaughan and Abbas Ali rode off to the latter's village, where they found Vaughan's camp already pitched. Abbas Ali waited until the cool of the evening and, after explaining to Vaughan where there was the best chance of meeting black buck, with many apologies and regrets at his inability to remain, started off back to Meerut.

That evening he went to the lines of the 10th to pay a formal call on the Subedar-Major of that regiment.

"I have reason to believe," said Abbas Ali, after the conversation had turned to the subject of the mutiny, "that the British not only know of the mutiny, but also the day on which it is intended it should take place."

"Of course the British know of the mutiny," said the Subedar-Major. "I myself told the Colonel of this regiment about it, in the same way as, I believe, you told Major Vaughan. They think that a man who goes out of his way to report to them what they already know cannot be implicated. But they cannot know the exact date. Not ten

men in the world know it. You do not know it yourself. No one in this station knows it but myself."

"That is why I came to you now. I am certain my own Colonel knows it, for one. I will tell you how I know," added Abbas Ali, seeing that the other was on the point of interrupting him. "You say that the British all know that the mutiny is at least possible. Each thinks that any regiment but his own might mutiny. In that case each British officer must know that, if any regiment did mutiny, his own would be called upon to quell it. Now, have the British officers in your regiment made any arrangements with you, the Subedar-Major, for quelling a mutiny that might break out in, say, my regiment, for instance?"

"No."

"Can you understand why not?"

"No; unless it is because the British are fools."

"Perhaps they are. Have you seen any preparations at all being made by them to meet this mutiny?"

"No."

"Well, I have. Why haven't they sent any of the English regiments to the hills this summer?"

"Because of the expense."

"Because the cartridges are greased with cows' fat," said Abbas Ali sarcastically. The other was also a Mahomedan, so would have no religious objection to cartridges greased with cows' fat.

"You mean that that is merely an excuse?"

"Of course. The expense would be no greater this year than it ever was before."

"But the British cannot think that the presence of a few extra British troops would prevent the mutiny if it was really intended."

"No. That is just what I am trying to impress upon you. They do not want to prevent the mutiny. They know that if they prevented it now they could not be certain of preventing it later. They don't want to prevent it now, because they are confident of quelling it, if it breaks out now, as arranged."

"How?"

"Because they know the day that has been arranged for it to break out. If they prevented it now, they could not be certain of preventing it later, when it might occur unexpectedly, when they did not know the arranged date."

"But how could they possibly know the day?"

"They certainly can't if you alter it."

The Subedar-Major thought over this for a while. Abbas Ali had not shown over much enthusiasm for the mutiny at first, but latterly he had certainly been active in its promotion, and no ulterior motive in his suggestion was apparent.

"That would upset all the plans in the other stations," the Subedar-Major said at last.

"Not nearly so much as would be the case if you carried it out on the day that the British expect it."

"But there is no absolute proof that the British do know the actual date."

"Nor can there be, unless you go and ask them; and you can't do that. There is sufficient proof to satisfy me that the British know more about the details of this proposed mutiny than I do myself

So I came to tell you that, unless the date is changed, neither I nor any man in my regiment will take part in it. They are as convinced as I am that the British themselves know more about your plans than they do. So, unless you both alter the date and take the senior officers of my regiment fully into your confidence, you need expect no assistance from us."

"I have no objection to telling you the date, but it is only to be communicated to absolutely trustworthy officers. It is the 19th of May. But I cannot alter it now, as that would upset all the plans at the other stations."

"Now I know perhaps as much about it as the British themselves do. But, as I said before, you can count my regiment out of the scheme. We are not going to walk blindly into a trap laid by the British. I have tried my best to persuade you not to, but if you persist that is your own funeral."

With that Abbas Ali rose and asked for his *ruksat*; but the other asked him to remain and explain any plan he had to suggest.

"Why was May 19th chosen as the day on which the mutiny is to break out?" Abbas Ali asked.

"Some date had to be decided on; and, as far as I know, it was purely arbitrary."

"To-day is the 8th. The British preparations are made to meet it on the 19th. So it must occur before then, and as much before then as possible. Now, obviously the best day to bring it off is on a Sunday. The English all pray on that day, and we will only have to overcome their guards to disarm the whole garrison. So the only possible date that remains

is the 10th—the day after to-morrow. Do you agree to that ? ”

“ Why not the 17th ? ”

“ It is too near the 19th. The English preparations will probably be complete by then.”

“ It is not long in which to make the final preparations for ourselves.”

“ It is exactly as long as you said you would let the date be known beforehand, if you did not alter it. You intended to let the date be generally known on the 17th. All you have to do is to say now, instead of on the 17th, that the mutiny is to break out the day after to-morrow, at nine o'clock in the morning, when all the English are in church. As you say, it is not much time to make the necessary arrangements. So, if you are willing to alter the date to the 10th, I must go and set about it at once. And if you are not willing to alter the date, I am afraid I must still ask for permission to go, as then there is no object in continuing the discussion. My regiment will not actively oppose you, but we will take no part in the outbreak until it is obvious to us that the British did not expect it. Then we will join you.”

“ Very well ; I will alter the date to the 10th. Make the necessary arrangements as you suggest, and ask all the native officers of your regiment to meet me at your Subedar-Major's quarters to-morrow evening at eight o'clock. By that time everything ought to be ready, and we can then discuss any final details that may have cropped up, and make certain that both regiments will act in unison.”

After the usual compliments Abbas Ali left. He had brought off a successful "bluff," and had gained his main object, namely, that the mutiny was to break out while Vaughan was out of the station. So he went off and told the men who were going to form his band of dacoits when the mutiny would take place, telling them also to rendezvous at his own village as soon as possible after they saw that the rising was an assured success. Then he told the other native officers of the result of his interview, and left the arrangements of the details to them. They did not interest him over much.

It is matter of history that the mutiny did actually break out at Meerut on Sunday, the 10th of May, though it is known that that was not the date originally intended by the organisers of the mutiny. All sorts of conjectures have been made to account for this change of plans, but the real cause has never been known.

Directly the mutiny broke out Abbas Ali rode straight to his village. It was not until the mutineers began to loot and burn the station that Vaughan began to realise that something serious had happened, and almost immediately afterwards Abbas Ali rode up to his camp. Abbas Ali, of course, pretended that he had been loyal all along, and that he had fled finding that he could do no good by remaining.

"The 10th have mutinied, sahib," he said, "and killed all the Europeans in Meerut. They did it while the English were in church. A lot of our men were forced to join them, but some others I have told to rendezvous here. But I had to do this

hurriedly, and I could only tell a few men who, I thought, would be loyal. No one knows that you are here, but some mutineers are certain to have heard about my having told the loyal ones to rendezvous here, and they will very likely send men to try and persuade the loyal ones to join them. If they find you here they will certainly kill you, and probably me as well.

"I must take you to a place where you can hide for a day or two, until I have separated the loyal ones from the mutineers. There will not be much danger to myself and the loyal sepoys from the mutineers, as the latter will be out to persuade us to join them, and in any case will have no enmity against us, provided we don't actively interfere with their plans; also they will want to hurry on to Delhi, so as not to miss their share of the loot there."

"How do you mean, not interfere with their plans? Any mutineers that come here you must arrest, of course."

"That can't be done unless I know who are mutineers and who are loyal. That will take time and require care, and would be impossible if you were found here. That would bring things to a head before I am ready."

"And how do you know that the mutineers will make for Delhi? They are much more likely to come this way and make for the Punjab, where they are more likely to find support. If they go to Delhi, they will be going into the heart of the country we hold strongest."

"I had to mix myself up with the mutineers at

first to avoid suspicion," answered Abbas Ali. "You do not seem to understand, sahib, that quite a lot of our own men were in this mutiny, as well as the 10th. I hope they were forced into it, but I cannot be sure. I heard a number of the mutineers say that they were off to loot Delhi. But there is no time to waste here in discussion. You must trust yourself to me if you do not want to be murdered in the next half-hour. That would do no manner of good, but if you do as I suggest you can lead us when I have separated the loyal from the mutineers. You are the only Englishman left in this district."

Vaughan had no choice but to place himself in Abbas Ali's hands. As soon as he had realised that something serious was amiss at Meerut he had started to strike his camp, and he was by now ready to move off. Abbas Ali gave orders for all that Vaughan and he could not carry on their ponies to be hidden in the village, and the two rode off in a north-westerly direction.

When Abbas Ali returned to his village, after hiding Vaughan in the jungle, he found his men already beginning to collect there. At first they seemed rather inclined to scatter over the countryside, and Abbas Ali, fearing lest a wandering party might come across Vaughan, persuaded them to remain concentrated at the village, as the mutineers might follow them up.

That evening Abbas Ali collected the leaders and explained more fully than he had done before what his plans for the future were, which included the possibility of a *volte-face* in case the English quelled

the mutiny. This at once led to an uproar, as the vast majority were perfectly loyal mutineers. But this was soon quieted down on Abbas Ali explaining that he did not expect the mutiny to be quelled ; but that it would be just as well merely to consider the possibility of benefiting themselves in either case, whatever the result of the mutiny might be.

Abbas Ali now saw that it would be a much more difficult and dangerous proceeding to save Vaughan's life than he had at first supposed. After the discussion had subsided and his men dispersed and settled down for the night, he racked his brain for some scheme by which he could save Vaughan, but could think of nothing that gave the least hope of success in the present temper of his companions ; and, if Vaughan was to be saved at all, something had to be done at once. But, try as he would, he could not see what that something was.

At last, growing drowsy with so much concentrated thought and anxiety for the safety of his friend and erstwhile benefactor, he came to the conclusion that there was now nothing for it but to leave Vaughan to his fate.

Among those who had attended the discussion earlier in the evening was a young Rajput Jemadar, by name Rughnath Singh. He also was in Vaughan's wing, but had no special liking for Abbas Ali, though the two had never openly quarrelled ; as if by mutual consent, they came in contact with one another as little as possible. But on one point they were agreed : in their regard for Vaughan.

Rughnath Singh knew that Vaughan was not at

Meerut when the mutiny broke out, but on week-end leave somewhere. Also he was convinced that Abbas Ali knew where Vaughan was.

By going very carefully to work so as not to arouse suspicion in the mind of anyone who did not agree with him, Rughnath Singh noted twenty men who, as far as he dare ascertain at present, would either welcome or at least protect any Englishman who might take refuge with the band. More he could not do that night.

The next morning Rughnath Singh gradually tackled these men, and found that he could be sure of fifteen of them, though he did not as yet tell them that he thought that an Englishman was in hiding close by. He did not know that for certain himself. So, as soon as he had got these fifteen men assured on his side, he made an opportunity for a private conversation with Abbas Ali.

"Vaughan Sahib was not in Meerut yesterday," he said. "Everyone knows that he was out shooting for the week-end. He must be in hiding somewhere in the district. Do you know where he is?"

"Yes," answered Abbas Ali. "But I don't see what we can do for him. His best chance of safety lies in our clearing out of this district and leaving him to fend for himself. All the mutineers have left Meerut for Delhi, and he can look after himself easily enough."

"Where is he?"

"If I tell you, what do you propose to do?"

"We are at least seventeen, and we will be able to protect him. Others will either join us or remain neutral, and, if there is any difficulty, we can split

up the band. Those who object will not go so far as to fight us over one Englishman."

"Well, you can do as you please. I think it would be in Vaughan Sahib's interests to leave him to fend for himself, but if you think you can protect him do so. I will tell you where he is, but beyond that I will do nothing."

Rughnath Singh had to be content with this. In an hour's time he came to Abbas Ali with his fifteen men, to whom he had now told the whole truth and who said that they were willing to protect Vaughan, and that if the rest of the band objected they would separate and form the nucleus of a fresh band. In addition to this, most of them said that they could get three or four others who, they were certain, would join them once the thing was done, either in protecting Vaughan or in separating from the rest. This gave Rughnath Singh a good deal of confidence, as it would probably mean facing the band with about fifty instead of fifteen men, but he said nothing to Abbas Ali about it. He was going to take the credit as well as the responsibility for rescuing and protecting Vaughan.

The little party went off unobtrusively to the place that had been pointed out by Abbas Ali. When they got near the spot Rughnath Singh approached it by himself and called Vaughan by name.

There was no answer.

"It is Jemadar Rughnath Singh, sahib," he called again. "Subedar Abbas Ali has sent me to bring you to the village."

"Are you by yourself?" Vaughan called.

"I have fifteen men with me to protect you."

"Come into the thicket by yourself."

Rughnath Singh stepped into the thicket and found Vaughan lying there in the shade.

"Abbas Ali told me you were here," he said.

"I think it will be safe for you to come to the village now."

"Where is Abbas Ali?"

"He is in the village with the rest."

"What happened at Meerut? I don't know what has happened beyond what Abbas Ali told me, and I don't understand it at all. However, I will come with you to the village and find out for myself."

With that Vaughan got up and started off for the village. But Rughnath Singh saw that Vaughan indeed did not understand what the position really was, and that, unless he did, he would make it extremely difficult for himself and his fifteen men to protect him. So Rughnath Singh stopped him.

"If you don't know what has happened," he said, "it would be better that I should tell you than that you should find out for yourself at the village. The whole Native Army has mutinied. Abbas Ali is a mutineer. So am I. So are we all. It was all arranged a long time ago. But some mutineers are less vindictive against the English than others. Whatever the reasons of the majority of the mutineers may have been, I speak only for myself. But a number of the others are, I know, of the same way of thinking as I am. I joined this mutiny, not from any hatred of the English, but

because I had to. If I and the others had not joined in the mutiny, we would merely have been killed without doing the cause of the English any good. Now that the mutiny has happened we are not going to fight the British. We are going to live here as bandits.

"Last night Abbas Ali hinted to a few of the leaders of the presence of an Englishman in hiding in the district, and it was at once apparent that a great number of the band would resent your presence as a member of the band. As I say, a few of us are here because we were forced to join the mutineers, but we have no heart in the mutiny as such. We are simply bandits. But others are here either for loot or to avoid the main fighting; but they have as much enmity against the English as any mutineer at Delhi. And I think they are in the majority. Again, others have neither love nor definite hatred of the Englishman as such, and the best we can expect of them is indifference.

"But those with a definite hatred of the Englishman will do their best to kill you; and the worst of it is that Abbas Ali's hints has led them to suppose that there is an Englishman in hiding in the district, and they will search for you, and you would certainly fall into their hands almost at once," he proceeded with perfectly cool candour.

"Abbas Ali will not risk his position as leader of the band by openly protecting you," said he. "He is one of the neutrals. But I have fifteen men with me here sworn to protect you, and others will join us when faced with the *fait accompli*. With that number there is no fear of our ability to protect

you, as an attempt to kill you would lead to a serious fight in the band itself, and all are agreed that the life of one Englishman is not worth that. If any serious difficulty arises, we will separate from the rest of the band with you and start on our own. Anyhow, we have sworn to protect you with our lives, if you will act in such a way as to make this possible.

"Now, sahib, you can either accept our protection and return with us to the village, or make your way wherever you please. But I am not lying to you when I tell you that I do not think you will ever see another white man again if you attempt to find your way to them yourself. If you are not killed, you will certainly starve. But if you rely on us, we will try and enable you to return to your own colour as soon as possible; but on the condition that, when you do return to them, you will not take any steps to secure our own capture by the British."

"I will come with you, but on condition that I retain my weapons," Vaughan replied, after a moment's consideration.

"Of course. You may be required to help in your own protection," answered Rughnath Singh with a smile; and he led the way back to the rest of his men.

Abbas Ali's own house was separated from the rest of the village by an open sandy patch about fifty yards wide and was surrounded by its own thorn zareba. Rughnath Singh had decided to take Vaughan there as unostentatiously as possible and await events. He had brought out Indian

dress, and Vaughan's tanned complexion made his disguise from a distance practically imperceptible. So the party started off for the village, after one man had gone on ahead to tell Abbas Ali what the intention was and return when the coast was clear. In this way they managed to smuggle Vaughan into Abbas Ali's house without arousing any suspicion. But it was obvious that he could not stay there long without his presence becoming generally known; he would have suffocated if he had remained hidden in the hut. So, leaving five men with Abbas Ali as a guard, Rughnath Singh went with the rest to sound the members of the band and find out which men were either willing actively to protect Vaughan, or at least would not actively resent his presence with the band.

In this way, out of the three hundred men of the band about fifty were found willing to protect Vaughan, and of the remainder about a hundred appeared to be indifferent. This was certainly better than Rughnath Singh had at first hoped for; but the vast majority of the band were not at heart virulent mutineers.

During the day the fifty who were willing to protect Vaughan took up their abode in that part of the village nearest to Abbas Ali's house. In the afternoon Vaughan could stand the atmosphere of the hut no longer. He came out and sat under the shade of a large mango tree inside the zareba of the house. As the heat of the day began to abate the other men in the village began to move about, and in a short time Ban Singh, a Rajput who had shown considerable resentment towards Abbas Ali

the previous evening, sauntered over to Abbas Ali's house to discuss the future plans of the gang. He had elected himself leader of the Rajput section of the band, and hoped to oust Abbas Ali from his position as leader of the whole.

As he swaggered into the compound uninvited he did not at first notice Vaughan, who was disguised in Indian dress and was sitting with his back towards the entrance of the compound with about a dozen of his most ardent protectors, including Rughnath Singh himself. Ban Singh noted with satisfaction that the majority of the men present were Rajputs. The presence of the Rajput majority reassured him, and he swaggered up to Abbas Ali, which brought him with his back to Vaughan.

"I came along to discuss with you our future plans," he said. "How long do you propose to stay here?"

Abbas looked at him peeringly.

"We were just discussing that when you interrupted us," answered he, after a pause sufficient to show him that he had those present on his side.

Ban Singh ignored the suggested snub. "Well," he repeated, "how long do you propose to stay here?"

"We have not yet decided," the former replied. "As soon as we do decide I will, of course, let you and the rest know."

This snub was too studied to be ignored. Ban Singh looked at Abbas Ali in amazement for a moment and then looked round at those present for support. It was at this moment that he caught

sight of Vaughan. He stood staring at him and then turned to the others, to find them watching him quietly, but with every sign of hostility.

"Who is this?" he asked Rughnath Singh.

"This is Major Vaughan Sahib," Rughnath Singh replied without taking his eyes off him.

Ban Singh drew his sword and made a rush at Vaughan, but three or four of his protectors barred his way. Finding not a single supporter amongst those present, he returned his sword with a laugh, and those who had barred his way slowly sheathed theirs—but they did not laugh.

"We will see what the rest of the band have to say to the presence of an Englishman among them," he said. And with that he turned to go, only to find that the others had surrounded him.

"Yes," said Rughnath Singh, "we will see what the rest of the band have to say to this. If they acquiesce, well and good. If there is any trouble, we at any rate will know that you are the cause of it, and you have seen in the last minute quite enough to show you that you will die before Vaughan Sahib."

Rughnath Singh made a sign to the circle to open, and Ban Singh walked off with the swagger that was indeed natural to him. But he was almost mad with rage and vexation. As he passed out of the compound he noticed a number of men collected at the edge of the village, attracted by what was obviously some sort of fracas. He made his way over to them and, in an impassioned harangue, told them that Abbas Ali had concealed an English officer in his house, calling on them to come with

him and kill the Feringhi and, if necessary, Abbas Ali as well, and the others responsible for his presence.

These men were all armed with their curved swords, which came more handy to them than the straight sword-bayonet. Out came every sword and the whole crowd, fifty men in all, rushed down on Abbas Ali's little party, carrying Ban Singh along with them. Ban Singh was too blind with rage to notice that Abbas Ali and his companions did not appear over-impressed by the charge bearing down on them. He rushed straight at Vaughan, but before he could reach him one of the men running beside him tripped him up, and he fell sprawling on the ground, his sword flying out of his hand. Before he could recover himself he was carried into Abbas Ali's house and again dumped on the ground.

Those who had taken part in the "charge" returned their swords and walked back laughing to the village. Several others from the village had heard the noise and came out to investigate, but they returned reassured when they were told by the principal actors that it was only a *tamasha*.*

Rughnath Singh came up to Ban Singh as he lay on the floor of Abbas Ali's hut. "Well," he said, "we did not have to wait long before seeing what the rest of the band think about having an Englishman amongst them." But he did not tell Ban Singh that he had happened to choose for his attempt to kill Vaughan the very fifty men that had sworn to protect him.

*Game. Show.

So Vaughan was tacitly admitted to the band. There were still dissentients, but Ban Singh was not popular with the rest of the band, and his high-handed attempt to take the law into his own hands against the recognised leader was not looked on with much favour. For the rest, his discomfiture was looked on rather in the light of a joke.

Things went smoothly for some time, and Ban Singh gave no sign of hostility. The band left the vicinity of Meerut, as the force moving under Anson towards Delhi approached, and moved into the Bikanir desert. But, finding very little worth looting there, they again moved north and, in the beginning of June, reached a point about ten miles south of the Barachina pass. Here they decided to make their headquarters and loot the countryside.

During these three weeks Ban Singh had given no active sign of hostility, but both Abbas Ali and Rughnath Singh mistrusted his quiescence. Abbas Ali, to tell the truth, now thought Vaughan's presence rather a nuisance, as it might at any moment be the cause of discord amongst his followers, none too homogeneous a band as it was owing to religious differences. He took advantage of a piece of news that now reached him of a British force moving down from the Punjab, and suggested to Vaughan that he should join it on its way to Delhi. Vaughan, who had been kept in absolute ignorance of current events, jumped at the suggestion, and that night Vaughan set out with Rughnath Singh and three or four others to find this force.

Early the next morning Ban Singh happened to come over, and noticed that Vaughan, who was

usually inseparable from Abbas Ali, was not there. He asked Abbas Ali where he was.

"He and Rughnath Singh were becoming rather a nuisance," said Abbas Ali carelessly. "Things were not going as they should do. The band was in two camps, all because of one Englishman. I see now that it was a mistake to have him with us at all, so I persuaded him that it would be best if he went away. Rughnath Singh and two or three others insisted on going with him. Perhaps that is just as well, as they will not go into the arms of the English, and they will do their best to prevent Vaughan doing so, for some little time at any rate. We can stay here until the district becomes too hot for us, and then move elsewhere before Vaughan can tell any English where we are, even if he intends to, which I doubt."

At this point a Rajput interrupted further discussion by bringing in a Purbiah who had escaped from Barachina after the failure of the mutiny there. This man, Bachan Singh, told Ban Singh the story of the failure of the mutiny at Barachina, but he said that with a hundred men they could easily rescue the remaining Purbiahs and kill the three British officers there. This would add so much to the numbers of the band that Abbas Ali willingly agreed, not realising for the moment that the additional strength would consist entirely of Purbiahs. He probably did not know what a Kolari was, and so was not aware that this would necessitate fighting fellow-Mahomedans, as Bachan Singh naturally laid no great stress on that part of his story. Besides, Abbas Ali hoped that this

opportunity for action would again consolidate the band and obliterate the memory of the Vaughan episode, out of which he felt that he had not himself come very brilliantly. Further discussion of Vaughan was swamped in the preparations for this new venture.

Guided by Bachan Singh the whole band entered the pass, where they unexpectedly came upon Nishan Ali and his party. Bachan Singh had hoped to get through the pass and onto the Barachina plain before the Kolaris were aware of the existence of this new enemy ; and Abbas Ali, when he found that their passage was barred and that there were four miles of hills to get through, was opposed to continuing the venture. But Ban Singh realised that to rescue these Purbiahs would give his own caste such a preponderance in the band as to be certain of placing him in the position of leader and ousting Abbas Ali.

So he was determined to push on at all costs. But for Bachan Singh's knowledge of the existence of the path leading from Utra direct into the pass, Ban Singh's determination against Abbas Ali's better judgment would have led the band into irretrievable disaster, and Abbas Ali took care later that the whole band should realise this. Then, when the remnants who had come back through the pass they had entered so blithely had again reorganised themselves on the plain, finding the district seemed likely to bring them more fighting than loot, he led the band along the foothills still further east, and disappears from this story.

CHAPTER XIII

THE COLONEL'S SON—AND MAJOR VAUGHAN

V AUGHAN himself had not enjoyed the position of bone of contention to the band any more than Abbas Ali had. The tension between Rughnath Singh and Ban Singh had nearly reached breaking point when Abbas Ali had made his suggestion, and Rughnath Singh and the men most attached to him readily agreed to accompany Vaughan; in fact, they insisted on doing so.

A natural mutual respect had grown up between the two, and Vaughan easily saw who was really responsible for his safety. He hoped that this willingness to accompany him foreshadowed the return of Rughnath Singh and the others with him to their loyalty to the British. But when he tried to persuade them to return to their allegiance they refused.

"We would be quite willing, sahib," Rughnath Singh explained, "if we thought it would be safe. We have kept a lot of information from you, but this mutiny has spread all over the Ganges valley. And, what is more, wherever it has spread, the Europeans, including the women and children, have been murdered. We ourselves have had no part in this, as you know; but the English are now

mad with rage. The uniform we are wearing would at once condemn us to be blown from cannons. When the English recover their former sense of justice and leniency, then we may perhaps be listened to ; but not now. There are Sikh cavalry two miles away, and we will leave you now. But, as you know that we at least have taken no part in the atrocities you are bound to hear of when you join the English, we trust you not to lead the English to us. Go with them to Delhi and, though it is against my own caste, I hope you may prosper : Salaam." And, without another word, Rughnath Singh turned with his men and left Vaughan before he could reply.

When he had gone a hundred yards or so Rughnath Singh turned and saluted, and Vaughan could only put as much meaning into his acknowledgment as possible, in the hope that Rughnath Singh would understand that he would not betray the whereabouts of the men who had protected him and who, though mutineers and unfaithful to their salt, were apparently not so bad as others whom he hoped soon to meet and help to defeat. Vaughan turned and walked in the direction pointed out by Rughnath Singh, and was soon met by a Sikh patrol and taken to their camp, where he met the British officer in command and easily established his identity as an Englishman.

Naturally, the first question put to Vaughan was what had happened at Meerut ; but he was, of course, unable to say. All he could say was that " at the time the mutiny broke out he was on leave, and that he had been in hiding ever since, gradually

moving west towards the Punjab, in the hope of being able to join any force moving against the mutineers." He said nothing about Abbas Ali and his gang. To him they had ceased to be mutineers and had become ordinary civilian dacoits. He was not aware that this particular brigade had been ordered to search for and disperse all such bands ; but he carefully avoided all discussion of the subject.

He remained at the headquarters of the brigade until he could get himself fitted out with uniform and necessaries (it must be remembered that he was still in Indian clothes), and was then ordered to report for duty to Colonel Barlock, Commandant of the 50th Punjab Infantry.

On arrival at the camp of the 50th, Vaughan went straight to Colonel Barlock's tent with his written orders to join that regiment. Here he was not received exactly with open arms by his new commanding officer. To Vaughan he seemed to resent having an officer not of his own choosing posted to his regiment, without waiting to consider or find out the capabilities of the new officer. Colonel Barlock told Vaughan rather brusquely that "he was himself coming over to the office tent in about half an hour and, in the meantime, to go to the mess tent and get some breakfast."

Vaughan did not take much notice of the other's brusqueness ; in fact, he realised that it was, in some ways, natural in a Commandant on having such a senior officer posted to his regiment just before going into action, and when he reached the mess tent, where two or three officers were just

finishing breakfast, his reception was quite different. In fact almost too cordial, until he had begged to be allowed to eat his breakfast before telling the story of his "escape" from Meerut. The Adjutant was one of the officers present in the mess when Vaughan entered and, when he heard that Vaughan was going to the office tent as soon as he had breakfasted, he offered to wait and go over with him.

There they found Colonel Barlock waiting for them and talking to a young officer. As Vaughan entered and saluted the Commandant turned to him.

"You will take over the command of the right wing, Major Vaughan," he said in a rather more affable manner than he had used in his own tent. "Lieutenant Barlock has commanded up to the present, and he will stay in that wing to teach you the ropes."

As the Colonel said nothing more and the interview seemed at an end, Vaughan saluted and withdrew. As he left the tent the officer to whom the Colonel had been talking when he entered followed him out.

"Rather queerly put," Vaughan thought; "but I suppose he means well. Well, the next step appears to be to find this paragon who is going to teach me the ropes. I suppose he is some relation of the Colonel's." Then, turning to the officer who had followed him out of the office, he asked him where he could find Barlock.

"I am Barlock," the other answered. "My father has just told me you are going to take command of my wing."

"Well, then, where are we likely to find your wing?"

Barlock did not reply for a moment. "The lines are over here, sir," he said at last, pointing to the tents, and he walked on beside Vaughan in silence.

"What class are the men?" Vaughan asked. "Hindus or Mahomedans or mixed?"

"They are all Sikhs," answered Barlock. "Have you ever met Sikhs, sir?"

"Yes," answered Vaughan. But he did not think it necessary to tell the other that he had only met them as enemies in the last Sikh War. The two now proceeded in silence to the lines, where Barlock introduced Vaughan to the native officers. While they were talking Vaughan pulled out his cigar case and, taking one himself, offered the case to one of the Sikh native officers. The latter of course refused politely, and Barlock looked up in surprise.

"The Sikhs don't touch tobacco," he said.

"Don't they?" Vaughan replied indifferently, and, returning the case to his pocket, he continued talking to the native officers. After three or four minutes polite conversation Vaughan moved off, calling Barlock to him, who seemed inclined to stay on and talk to the native officers.

"Where do you do your office work?" he asked.

"Office work? What little there is I do in my tent."

"Well, come along, and see whether my tent is pitched and ready. Then you can bring the books and things there."

"What books? I haven't got any books. We are on active service."

"Well, how are the men paid? You must have some sort of accounts, even on service."

"I don't know."

"Have the men been paid this month?"

"I don't know," answered Barlock, and, turning round, called Jagat Singh, the senior native officer of the wing.

This was altogether too much for Vaughan, but he managed to control himself, while Jagat Singh came up and Barlock asked him whether the men had been paid that month. When Jagat Singh replied that most of them had, Vaughan could not trust himself to speak, but just nodded his head, and Jagat Singh saluted and walked back. Barlock turned to continue towards the officers' tents, but Vaughan stood barring his way.

"Have you kept no accounts at all, or papers or books, in this wing which you can hand over to me?" he asked.

Until Vaughan spoke Barlock had not realised how angry he was. He now rather repented of having gone so far so early in their acquaintance.

"No, sir, I haven't," he said, with a good deal more respect than he had yet shown. "It has not been the custom in the regiment to carry a lot of papers and books about."

At this point Cunningham, the Adjutant, came up, saluted Vaughan, and told him the Colonel would hold "durbar" in half an hour. Glancing at Barlock to see that he also had heard, he saluted and went on to tell the other officers. Barlock

saluted and strode off towards his tent, leaving Vaughan standing where he was. Vaughan looked after him, undecided whether or not to call him back. But Cunningham's interruption had broken the thread of his remarks, and he decided that anyhow it could wait until after durbar. Vaughan was beginning to dislike his wing officer and, to all appearance, the feeling was mutual. So he strolled off to see how the arrangements for pitching his own tent were getting on.

When he returned to the office for durbar, he found the other officers of the regiment already assembled there. He saluted, and took the vacant seat on the left of the Colonel and proceeded to take stock of the others. Besides the Colonel and himself there were four other officers, and none of them seemed over twenty-five years of age. Cunningham and the two whom he had met in the mess at breakfast seemed to be ordinary normal subalterns, but the two Barlocks, Colonel and subaltern, were certainly abnormal, and there was no one of his own age and standing with whom he could associate. As far as he could judge at present from the attitude of the other subalterns, Barlock the younger was highly unpopular; but, though he could understand and concur in this, it could make little or no difference to him. Barlock, who was sitting next to him, seemed to be still in his sulks, until Vaughan looked at his face and saw that the sulks had now changed to childish temper. When he caught Vaughan's eye, he openly scowled at him.

"The native officers didn't mention anything when we were talking this morning," Vaughan said

to him after meeting his scowl for a moment. "There is nothing in the wing to bring up at durbar I suppose, is there?"

"No, sir," answered Barlock, and he looked down at his boots.

Vaughan decided that he was not in for a very cheerful existence in the immediate future, but his reverie was interrupted by the ceremonial procedure of durbar. This was soon over, and then the Colonel turned to Vaughan.

"Have you any points to bring up, Vaughan?"

"No, sir," answered Vaughan. The question seemed purely conventional; Vaughan could have nothing to bring up, as he had only been with the regiment about three hours.

"Has any other British officer anything?"

Barlock rose and saluted. "I have handed over command of the right wing to Major Vaughan, sir," he said. "I should like now to be transferred to the left wing."

"Why?" asked the Colonel, frowning slightly.

Barlock paused for a moment. "Major Vaughan seems to think I'm a damned *babu*,"* he blurted out at last.

"What does all this mean, Major Vaughan?" asked the Colonel, turning to Vaughan.

Vaughan rose slowly to collect his thoughts. This sudden outburst had taken him rather by surprise.

"I think it only means a little display of childish temper on Lieutenant Barlock's part, sir," he said quietly, but distinctly. "Lieutenant Barlock is

*Clerk.

mistaken, and he knows he is. It is less than an hour ago that I made it perfectly clear to him that I did not think him a babu of any sort, damned or otherwise. I will not now say what I do think he is, as I hope eventually to be able to change my opinion. Also, he knows perfectly well that he has not handed over command of the wing to me; or, at least, that I have not taken over yet. I had no intention of telling you this for the present, sir, until Lieutenant Barlock had had the opportunity of righting what was due to his own slackness.

"But, as he has seen fit to tell you that he has handed over command to me, which statement he knows to be untrue, I must tell you that the wing is in an absolutely unsatisfactory condition, and I cannot accept the responsibility of taking over command of it until I have had more opportunity of investigating the position."

As Vaughan proceeded the Colonel's face got redder and redder, but Vaughan had given him no opportunity to interrupt.

"Major Vaughan," said the Colonel, speaking as quietly. "You must remember that I am responsible for everything in this regiment, and that I am satisfied with the present state of the wing of which I have ordered you to take command. Your only responsibility now lies in maintaining it in its present state of efficiency. You will find that a number of details are different in this regiment to what you have been accustomed to in the Bengal Army. At the same time, the customs you have been brought up to in the Bengal Army have not prevented that army from mutinying. So it is

obvious that those customs are capable of improvement. You will please understand that any custom you find here different to that of the Bengal Army is merely an improvement. I do not wish you to introduce into this regiment customs which have had such a disastrous effect in Bengal. "I do not consider," he continued, turning to his son, "that there is anything to be gained by transferring you from the wing you already know."

This occurred in public durbar. Vaughan was on the point of replying hotly, but the idea entered his head that the Colonel was merely goading him to insubordination in order to get rid of him. Why he should do so he did not know; but Vaughan thought better of making any reply at all, saluted and sat down. It was obvious from the Colonel's remarks about introducing customs into the regiment that young Barlock had told his father before durbar that Vaughan had objected to the absence of accounts in the wing. And, if the custom of private dress rehearsals between father and son before public durbar was one of the "improvements," it was not a very cheerful prospect for Vaughan to have the Colonel's son as his wing officer.

"Durbar is dismissed," said the Colonel when Vaughan had sat down. The Colonel walked off towards the mess followed by the other officers, except Vaughan, who walked by himself to his own tent, before following the others to the mess tent. There he stood for a moment in the tent door. Young Barlock was talking.

"He doesn't know the first thing about any-

thing," he was saying. "He said he knew all about Sikhs, and then offered Jagat Singh a cigar."

Whether or not Barlock had seen Vaughan standing in the tent door, Vaughan, in his present mood, thought that he had, and that he had intended Vaughan to overhear this remark. Colonel Barlock was present and apparently listening to the conversation, and Vaughan looked at him to see if he intended to reprimand his son for what was, to all intents and purposes, a piece of insubordination. But Colonel Barlock merely returned Vaughan's look and appeared to think that the next move lay with him. So, apparently, did the others present in the mess, and Vaughan sat down in an expectant silence. Then he turned to young Barlock.

"I don't know whether or not you intended me to overhear that remark," he said. "I can only presume that you did not. Unfortunately, I did overhear it. I can't prevent you talking about me or my actions behind my back; but, when you see fit to do so, I must ask you as far as possible to confine yourself to the truth."

"Really, Vaughan," said the Colonel. "I don't know whether it is the custom in the Bengal Army for a senior officer to insult a junior, who now has no ordinary means of redress. Do you realise that this is the third time in less than an hour that you have, to all intents and purposes, called Lieutenant Barlock a liar? Tell me, did you or did you not offer Jagat Singh a cigar?"

"I did," answered Vaughan. "That remark, taken by itself, is not inaccurate. It was the remark before that that was inaccurate."

"Barlock made no remark before that. You entered the tent just as he made that remark."

"That only makes it obvious to me that when he made the remark he intended me to overhear it. I did. I can repeat the remark exactly as he said it: 'He said he knew all about Sikhs, and then offered Jagat Singh a cigar.' When did I say I knew all about Sikhs?" he asked, turning sharply to young Barlock.

"You asked me what class of men were in the wing, and I told you Sikhs, and I asked if you had ever met them, and you said you had."

"So I have. But as far as I remember I have never spoken to one until yesterday. I met them in the Sikh War, but never had an opportunity then of finding out whether or not they smoked tobacco. It was a point in which I was not particularly interested."

Fortunately at this moment further discussion was stopped by the Brigadier entering the tent.

"Good morning, Barlock. Good morning, everybody. Sit down, please. No thanks, Barlock, I won't have any tiffin. I'm afraid you'll have to hurry over yours. Does anybody know who, what, or why a Kolari is? Do you know anything about them, Vaughan? You've been in this part of the world."

General Matthews was a short, wiry little man, who talked, as he did everything else, in little nervous jerks. Not that he was in the least nervous. He had the reputation of being one of the smartest soldiers of his day.

"The hilly country north and north-east of us

here is Kolaristan, sir," answered Vaughan. "But I have never been there, and I don't know anything about the Kolaris. I've never even met one. But, by their reputation amongst the men on the plains, I should imagine they are pretty average scoundrels."

"I expect so. I've only met one, just now. He looks a big enough scoundrel. It seems there was a regiment stationed at a place called Barachina. I think I remember hearing something about it."

"Yes, sir. That's perfectly correct. The looth were there."

"Well, according to this fellow, who calls himself Akbar Ali, they've mutinied. Now they're looting right and left. Law-abiding people like Akbar Ali don't like it. He suggests we should go and mop them up. He is willing to help. So I'm going to do it. It isn't much out of our way. Akbar Ali says there is a good road from there to Meerut. Will you be ready to move off at four o'clock this afternoon, Barlock? Akbar Ali will guide you. Just reconnoitre the place. I'll bring the rest of the brigade up to-morrow. Akbar Ali will co-operate by attacking Barachina from the north. So don't get seriously involved. It'll only frighten them off into the hills. Then we won't have time to catch them. It all depends on our being able to move straight on to Barachina and finding the rebels still there."

"If they escape to the surrounding hills, we can't follow them, as we are bound to come back and make for Meerut according to our orders. When we have gone they would be able to collect

again at their leisure. They'll be no worse off after our visit than before. Well, you will be wanting to make your arrangements. Will you come over to my tent at two o'clock, Barlock? We'll discuss the whole thing more fully with Akbar Ali then. Good morning, everybody." And with that the Brigadier bustled out of the tent.

No one was inclined to continue the conversation from the point at which it had been interrupted by the Brigadier. The news he had brought put everyone in his best humour.

"We had better have tiffin at once and get the mess packed," said Colonel Barlock. "I'll give everyone their orders while we are eating. Vaughan," he continued, when they were all seated round the table, "you will take two companies of the right wing and be advanced guard. This new pal of the General's will go with you. Keep your eye on him. Barlock, you'll see to the packing of the mess and the transport generally. You'll command the rearguard of one company of the right wing. Cunningham, you come with me to the General's at two o'clock. Smythe, you see to the packing and movement of the left wing. Johnstone is at your disposal, Vaughan. Have you got a horse? Well, you can get one from the cavalry. I'll see the General about it this afternoon."

Everything went without a hitch, and at dusk that evening Vaughan reached a point about five miles south of the Barachina pass. Here he halted and prepared the camp for the regiment, which did not arrive till after dark.

This same night Jayle bivouacked with the

greater part of the Kolaris at the south end of the pass, after driving Abbas Ali and his mutineers back on to the plains. Five miles south of them Colonel Barlock and his officers were eating a scratch evening meal—one could hardly call it dinner—and the Commandant was explaining the arrangements for the next day.

“Akbar Ali says that the entrance to the pass is about five miles from here. So we can't reconnoitre it from here. At the same time, we can't move the regiment by daylight. Neither can we stay here. The rebels would spot us at once. They are certain to have look-out posts on the hills. But Akbar Ali also says that there is a village two miles south of the pass, and three miles from here, where we would not be so conspicuous. The Kolaris looted this village about a week ago”—Akbar Ali had not mentioned it was the village he himself had looted—“and it is now absolutely deserted. So I propose to move off at two o'clock in the morning. We will then reach the village well before dawn, and get comfortably hidden before there is any chance of the Kolaris seeing us from the hills. I don't suppose they keep a very strict look-out.”

On arrival at this deserted village, when the Colonel was satisfied that the regiment was as well hidden as was possible, he called Vaughan.

“As soon as it is light you and Barlock take a company and graze the camels,” he said. “Make yourselves as inconspicuous as you can, but keep your eyes skinned, and as far as possible reconnoitre up to the pass. If you can go up the pass and reconnoitre the first mile or so, so much the better.

Even if the mutineers do see you, they won't get panic-stricken at the presence of a company. You others," he added, turning to the rest, "can do anything you like provided neither I nor the Kolaris see you."

Vaughan and Barlock took their company and the camels off, as soon as it was light enough to be safe, and started grazing the camels, at first quite close to the village; and gradually they scattered over the plain between the village and the mouth of the Barachina pass.

CHAPTER XIV

THE LAST RAID

JAYLE and Jardigne, it will be remembered, had left the Kolaris soon after dawn and ridden on ahead to Barachina. On arrival they sent word to Dwyre, telling him to come into the station, where the three British officers intended to settle down quietly for a while and repair the damage. The weather was altogether too hot for any more alarms and excursions.

They had not been in Barachina more than an hour, however, when a Kolari came in mounted on a *tat*,* with the report that there were about a hundred camels grazing near the mouth of the pass, and that there seemed to be very few men guarding them. Jayle sighed; it seemed that he could not rest quietly on his laurels even yet.

Noting this, Jardigne volunteered to go and investigate.

"No," said Jayle with a laugh. "The ambush is my scheme entirely, and you were sceptical about it at first. If you do it, and it doesn't come off, I should always think that, if I had done it, it would have been a success. While if I do it, and it doesn't come off, I shall only have myself to blame."

* A small pony about the size of a English donkey.

"What is it all about?" Niaz Mahomed asked; he, of course, did not understand this English conversation, but gathered that it centred round the news that had just been brought in about the camels grazing at the mouth of the pass. "We don't want any camels; we have got more than we know what to do with already. Why shouldn't they graze at the mouth of the pass? It isn't worth while going twenty miles to steal a few camels."

"No," answered Jayle. "It isn't the camels I want; it is the muskets and ammunition. Suppose we were to send a few men to steal about ten camels and stampede them up the pass, and at the same time lay a strong ambush about a mile up the pass. The rebels will come blundering up the pass to recover their camels, and run straight into the ambush; and we will get their muskets and ammunition without any risk to ourselves, and without giving them the chance to waste any of the ammunition."

Niaz Mahomed jumped at the idea, and it was decided that Jardigne should remain at Barachina and tell Dwyre what was in the wind, while Jayle and Niaz Mahomed tried the ambush. It was still quite early in the day, and the afternoon was obviously the best time to stampede the camels, as, in the first place, the men guarding them would be at their slackest at about two o'clock in the afternoon, and, in the second place, if there should happen to be a strong force of rebels in the vicinity, they would not be likely to attempt reprisals for the ambush late in the afternoon; and, if they did,

all the advantages would lie with the Kolaris as soon as it got dark.

Jardigne naturally did not appreciate his rôle, but Jayle insisted that he had had his share of the excitement, both in the capture of Akbar Ali and in the affair at the pass the previous day, and someone had to remain at Barachina. When Dwyre came he could either remain at Barachina, or follow Jayle and Niaz Mahomed, as he pleased.

"One minute," said Jardigne, as Jayle was on the point of leaving him; "do you think it is possible that these unguarded camels are a trap for us—out of revenge for yesterday?"

"No, I do not," answered Jayle. "And, even if they were, we are not going to chase the camels on to the plain, but into the hills. No trap can have been laid between the camels and the hills without being seen by our own men." And with that Jayle rode off with Niaz Mahomed towards the pass.

When Dwyre reached Barachina and heard from Jardigne what Jayle and Niaz Mahomed were proposing to do, he did not follow them. All he thought of for the moment was a square meal and the chance of going through the ruins of his bungalow, to collect anything that might have escaped the flames and looting. That bungalow, which had been shared by Dwyre and Jardigne, was the least damaged of all, as it was rather isolated from the others. Jardigne had already collected a certain amount of their property, and the two were soon busy going through the relics of their worldly goods, with alternate bursts of laughter and annoyance, depending rather on who the owner

was of each article that was unearthed from the ruins.

Jayle and Niaz Mahomed discussed the details of the ambush as they rode out to the pass, and it was decided that Niaz Mahomed himself, with about half a dozen men, should stampede a few of the camels nearest the mouth of the pass and drive them up past Jayle, who would be lying in ambush with the rest of the Kolaris. The two met the Kolaris at the head of the pass, and went with them to a point about a mile north of the mouth of the pass, where there was a perfectly ideal place for an ambush.

Jayle laid his ambush carefully with fifty men, and took another fifty towards the mouth of the pass. With these he tried several "dress rehearsals," coming up the pass in every possible way that the rebels could, until he was certain that, whatever way they came up, they were bound to fall into an ambush and then be rushed from one flank or the other.

It was after midday before Jayle was completely satisfied with his ambush, and then Niaz Mahomed went off with his half-dozen men to bait the trap. He climbed to the top of a spur overlooking the plain and reconnoitred the position from there. The camels were scattered all over the plain, but a bunch of between twenty and thirty at once attracted his attention. These had strayed a good quarter of a mile from the rest, and were in the very jaws of the pass. Beside the spur on which he himself was a dry nullah ran down on to the plain, between these camels and the rest, and it

would be perfectly easy for himself and his men to creep down this nullah and get between these camels and the remainder. But, instead of stampeding them at once, he decided to drive them as far as he could up towards the pass before the alarm was given. He left one man on the spur to warn him as soon as the men guarding the camels appeared to begin taking notice of those that were straying, and crept down the nullah with the remainder until he was between the camels and their guards.

Telling one man to "keep his eye on the sentry on the spur in readiness for his signal," he began to drive the camels quietly towards the pass, keeping himself and his men well under cover.

He had covered about half the distance to the actual mouth of the pass, when the sentry on the spur gave the signal that the straying of the camels had been noticed by their guards. While this sentry made the best of his way into the hills to the west of the pass, Niaz Mahomed and his men jumped up with a yell, and successfully stampeded the camels into and up the pass before their guards could get within range of them. They stampeded as hard as they could go, right through Jayle's ambush and half a mile beyond, where Niaz Mahomed collected them in an open space where they would be seen by the men coming up to recover them before they reached Jayle's ambush, and would give them the necessary incentive and impetus to rush blindly into the trap prepared for them. There he awaited developments.

Jayle watched the camels stampede past him,

and he, too, lay in his ambush awaiting developments.

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It will be remembered that Vaughan and Barlock had, early the same morning, taken the camels of the regimental transport to graze. Vaughan had decided to put off the reconnaissance of the pass until the evening, when he could send the camels back to camp, and the necessity of detaching a large proportion of his men to guard them would not interfere with his freedom of movement while making his reconnaissance, and would also, by that number, increase his available strength. When Vaughan had made the necessary arrangements, as he thought, to guard the camels and prevent their getting scattered, he called Barlock aside.

"The men are pretty tired, as well as ourselves," he said. "We will divide them into two equal parties. I will take one half and guard the camels till midday, while you and your half remain in reserve and get what rest you can. But you must be in readiness to drive off an attack at any point without delay, and your men mustn't scatter. You must remain hidden in these trees.

"In case of alarm send half your men to the point of attack, and stand by with the remainder ready to move to any other point. It is unlikely, if there is an attack, that it will begin at the really dangerous point. It is almost certain to begin with a feint. From midday till about four o'clock your men can do the guarding of the camels, while mine rest in reserve. At four o'clock we will collect the

camels together and send them back to camp with ten men or so, and with the remainder we will make the reconnaissance the Colonel wants. Is that clear?"

"Yes, sir," answered Barlock, and he collected his men under the trees, where they rested, without removing their accoutrements, till midday. At midday his men relieved Vaughan's and Vaughan came back into reserve where Barlock had been.

As nothing had happened in the meantime and everything seemed quiet, Barlock gradually relaxed his vigilance until, at about two o'clock, in the heat of the afternoon, the native officer came up to where he was sitting in the shade of a tree and said he thought the camels were getting too scattered. The native officer suggested that Barlock should ask Vaughan to send some more men to help collect them, as they had now got beyond the control of the few men in his party. Barlock got up leisurely, blamed the native officer for allowing the camels to scatter beyond the control of the men he had, but did not send word to Vaughan of what had happened, or ask him to send men to help him collect the camels again under his control. Only one batch seemed to have strayed far, and he thought that, by sending half his men after them, he could get them back without Vaughan ever knowing what had happened.

"It is unnecessary to get more men," he said to the native officer. "They are resting. Take half the men you have got and bring that lot back. They are the only lot that have really strayed very far. When we have got those back we can easily collect the others."

"Very good, sahib," answered the native officer, going off to do his bidding.

Shortly after the native officer had left him, and he had again settled himself comfortably under his tree, a man came running back to Barlock with a message from the native officer. As soon as the native officer had started out to bring the strayed camels back to the rest half a dozen men had jumped out of a nullah between him and the camels and driven them off into the hills.

Nothing could prevent this coming to Vaughan's ears, so Barlock sent the same man off at once to tell him what had happened, and himself joined the native officer and his men and started off in pursuit of the stolen camels. But, before he had gone very far, Vaughan galloped up and asked him what had happened.

"Half a dozen men have stampeded about twenty or thirty of the camels into the hills," answered Barlock breathlessly, pointing to where the last of the camels could be seen entering the narrow defile at the mouth of the pass. Vaughan halted the men and looked quietly at Barlock.

"What did you propose to do with these twenty men?" he asked.

"Go and recover the camels, of course," said Barlock. "There are only six or seven of the raiders."

"You only saw six or seven, you mean. The camels are very scattered," Vaughan added. From his horse he had a better view of the plain and the extent to which the camels had strayed than Barlock thought. "If you take off half your men to

chase those few, you'll only lose a lot more without the least hope of recovering even those that have already been stolen. Supposing there are only six raiders, they will go as fast as they can drive the camels. When do you suppose you would catch them up? On the other hand, it seems to me much more likely that these men are merely a decoy to get a small party into the hills and there wipe them out. No. Those camels are lost to us for ever." Then, turning to the native officer, he added: "Take these men and collect all the camels. I will send the men at present in reserve to help you. You come along with me, Barlock. I want you to tell me exactly how this happened." And Vaughan turned his horse back towards the clump of trees where the reserve was

"But we must make some sort of attempt to recover the camels we have lost," said Barlock, honestly surprised at Vaughan's supine attitude.

"Who must?" Vaughan answered, his temper gradually rising. "Do you think I am going to allow you deliberately to risk the lives of these men in the hope that your own gross carelessness in allowing the thing to happen at all will be overlooked in the more disastrous sequel?"

"There'll be an awful row," said Barlock sulkily.

"I know there will; but I am not in the mood to argue with you, or to listen to any arguments from you as to what I should do. Your standing there talking is delaying the carrying out of the order you heard me give to the native officer, to take these men and collect the camels which, owing to your slackness, have been allowed to stray

beyond your control. You also heard me tell you to come with me. Comply with that order."

Vaughan turned his horse and Barlock sulkily followed him. When the two reached the reserve Vaughan dismounted and sent all the men except about ten to help in collecting the camels. When they had gone he turned to Barlock.

"I will tell you, Barlock," he said, "what I gather, from the use of my own eyes, was the cause of the loss of those camels. When I handed over the guarding of them to you at midday they were all more or less collected, and, anyhow, within a ring of groups of our own men guarding them. When I came up to you two hours later they were scattered all over the plain, practically forming a ring round your men. Some even had been detached by a party of raiders, whom you had allowed to get between you and the camels you were supposed to be guarding and stampede them into the hills, beyond any possible hope of recovery. The only conclusion I can come to, from what I saw, is that you took absolutely no trouble to carry out your orders. Is that conclusion correct?"

"No, sir. You are certainly mistaken on one point. The raiders had not stampeded the camels into the hills beyond any possible hope of recovery. If left to myself I would have recovered them. But your interference prevented me doing so."

"We will agree to differ on the point of whether my interference prevented you from recovering the camels, or from making what was an unfortunate incident into a more serious disaster. That was not the question I put to you. Judging from what

I saw, the loss of the camels was due to gross carelessness on your part in guarding them. Is that so ? ”

“ I don’t pretend to be perfect. Anyone is liable to make a mistake. But I do say that, when you found I had made a mistake, you deliberately prevented me from attempting to retrieve it because you dislike me. You were so pleased to find me in the wrong that you took advantage of the accident of your rank to prevent me from putting it right again.”

It was hopeless. Vaughan had no wish to get Barlock into more trouble than he could help. But Barlock’s own attitude made any help, or even consideration, from Vaughan impossible.

“ Go and collect the company and the camels ready to march back to camp,” said Vaughan. “ I don’t intend to make any further reconnaissance of the pass. For that I require subordinates whom I can trust. Come back and report to me here when everything is ready for the march back.”

Barlock saluted and went off to carry out this order. When everything was ready he returned and reported to Vaughan, who mounted and rode to the company without a word, and during the march back to camp not a word passed between the two officers. On arrival at camp Vaughan found that the whole brigade had come up. He dismissed the company and, still without a word to Barlock, went off to his tent to write the report of what had happened. This took a considerable time and, after three or four attempts to write a report that was not too damning against Barlock, he decided to

report merely the bare fact of the loss of the camels, and put off the inevitable explanation till later, when he hoped to make it verbally and in Barlock's presence.

It was now nearly dark, and Vaughan had just finished writing out this report when Cunningham, the Adjutant, rapped and came into the tent.

"Hullo, Cunningham," said Vaughan; "you're the very man I want. I suppose you have heard about this unfortunate episode with the camels?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I've just finished my report. Here it is."

"The Colonel has ordered me to give you this copy of a letter he has sent to the Brigadier. Perhaps you had better read it first before sending in your report, sir."

Cunningham handed Vaughan a sealed letter, which Vaughan opened and read. And this is what he read:

"No. 69.

"*From Lieut.-Col. G. J. BARLOCK, Commandant
50th P.I., to Brigadier-General R. S. MATH-
HEWS. Dated June 8th, 1857.*

"SIR,

"I have the honour to report that I have found it necessary to suspend Major Vaughan, lately attached to this regiment, from duty under the following circumstances:

"This morning I issued orders to Major Vaughan to guard the camels of the regimental transport while grazing, and also to reconnoitre as far as

possible without getting seriously engaged up the Barachina pass, with a view to operations likely to occur there in the near future. While the camels were in his charge a small party of Kolaris (apparently about half a dozen) stole between twenty and thirty of these camels and made away with them into the hills. This may have been due to carelessness on his part, or lack of tactical ability to make proper arrangements for safeguarding the camels while grazing; and, though this would be no excuse in an officer of Major Vaughan's seniority, if this were the only occasion he has deserved censure, I would not have taken such a drastic step as to suspend him from duty without reference to higher authority.

"But, when the camels had been stolen from under his very nose, so far from making any attempt to recover them (in doing which he could have at the same time made the reconnaissance of the pass which he had been ordered to do), he came straight back to camp, where he has, I believe, skulked in his tent ever since his return three hours ago, without even making any report of the occurrence to me. Moreover, he has entirely disregarded my order to make a reconnaissance of the pass. His conduct, I regret, I cannot describe otherwise than as arrant cowardice.

"Ever since Major Vaughan joined this regiment his attitude has been in every way unsatisfactory. During this time on no less than five occasions he has failed to carry out orders, resulting on more than one occasion in considerable loss of Government animals. Further, he has attempted to intro-

duce into this regiment customs with which he knows perfectly well that I entirely disagree, and which have already proved disastrous in the Bengal Army. He is deservedly unpopular with all ranks in the regiment, with a virulent and vindictive temper, and has on several occasions attempted to evade responsibility by throwing the blame on a junior.

"He is slovenly and careless in every way, and I consider him a most undesirable officer in this regiment. His failure to attempt to recover the camels stolen by Kolaris in broad daylight from under his very nose alone stamps him as an officer of little value; and this is the culminating point which proves that my estimate of his character and capabilities is correct.

"His influence is all for inefficiency and discontent, and now that, in addition to his other defects, he has shown himself an arrant coward, I request that he may be removed from the regiment as soon as possible.

"I have the honour to be, Sir,

"Your most obedient servant,

(Signed) "G. J. BARLOCK, *Lieut.-Col.*

"*Commandant, 50th P.I.*"

Vaughan read this letter through carefully and then looked up and saw Cunningham still standing in the tent door.

"Sorry, Cunningham," he said; "I didn't see you were still standing. Sit down on the bed. Has this pack of lies been sent to the Brigadier already, or is it merely going to be sent?"

"That letter has already been sent to the Brigadier."

"But what the devil have I introduced into the regiment that the Colonel disapproves of? And what orders have I failed to carry out?"

"I don't know, sir. I'm afraid I can't discuss the contents of the letter. My orders are merely to give you the copy and take your receipt."

"Do you mind waiting while I answer the letter? From my own point of view, that would be better than merely giving you a receipt."

"Very good, sir."

"By the way, the Colonel in this letter seems to make a point of the fact that I haven't sent in a report of the loss of the camels. Would you mind remembering that I offered you my report before you had given me the copy of this letter? Also, you can see for yourself that the whole place is littered with rough copies of the report, which accounts for the delay in sending it in. I am not very facile with my pen. I haven't been 'skulking in my tent,' as the Colonel seems to think."

"Very good, sir. I'll remember."

Vaughan then wrote the following letter:

"SIR,

"I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of a copy of letter No. 69 of to-day's date. As the Commandant states that he has not received my report of the affair in which camels were lost this afternoon, I am at a loss to understand on what information he has based his opinion.

"With regard to the loss of the camels, I will

merely state shortly my reasons for not following them up with the men I had at my disposal.

"It is obvious there were two things the Kolari raiders might do: (1) Make off into the hills with the camels as fast as they could; or (2) lay an ambush for any party attempting to follow them up carelessly.

"In the same way there were three things I might do: (1) Follow the camels up as fast as I could; or (2) follow them up carefully; or (3) not follow them at all, but collect the camels, which were at the time unduly scattered, to prevent such an accident recurring.

"Of the two things that the Kolaris might do, my own opinion at the time was that the second was the more probable.

"My total available strength was eighty men. As I still had to guard the camels that remained, I could not use my whole force to chase the few that had been stolen. I, therefore, had at the most fifty men available to follow up the stolen camels.

"Of the three things I could have done, the first is the only one that offered the least prospect of recovering the camels. This I did not do as, if the Kolaris laid an ambush, which I considered probable and which was at least possible, the fifty men would blunder straight into it and, besides losing the camels, I would have lost fifty men. Even if the Kolaris did not lay an ambush, but made off up the pass as fast as they could, the fifty men would not overtake them until they had gone at least three miles into unknown hilly country; and, even if they had overtaken them so soon, they

could not have recaptured and brought the camels back before dark.

"I did not consider the very problematical recovery of the camels worth the undoubted risk incurred by following them into unknown hilly country without taking the most careful precautions against an ambush.

"This brings me to the second thing I could have done, namely, to follow the camels up slowly. My reasons for not doing this were: (1) Whether or not the Kolaris laid an ambush, I could not possibly recover the camels—they would be proceeding into the hills at about treble the pace I could move—taking the necessary precautions against the ambush I suspected; and (2) I incurred the same risk of sending fifty men unsupported into unknown hilly country.

"This course, if successful, would undoubtedly have enabled me to make a reconnaissance of the pass; but this I intended to do later with all my available men, after sending the camels back to camp; and for this I had issued my orders before the camels were stolen. My reasons for cancelling those orders will appear later. But, as there was no prospect of recovering the camels, it is obvious that there was no object in making the reconnaissance then with fifty men when I could do it later with eighty.

"This left me only the third course I have suggested. If it is considered that I was wrong in taking this course, I request that I may be furnished with a copy of the orders I should have issued in the circumstances as they actually occurred, *i.e.*,

after the camels had been stolen and got away into the hills.

"The reason I did not make a reconnaissance up the pass was, I regret to say, that I found, after carefully considering the cause of the loss of the camels, that I could not trust my immediate junior. The impression produced on my mind by the Commandant's instructions was that the reconnaissance of the pass was not an order, but to do so or not was left to my discretion. This, however, is immaterial, as but for this distrust of my immediate junior, I would have made this reconnaissance. I do not wish to throw blame on to a junior, and under the present circumstances, as I have been suspended from duty, I wish to keep the reasons for my distrust of Lieutenant Barlock to myself. As, however, I am forced to give my reason for not making the reconnaissance, I merely state that that was my reason, and that I told Lieutenant Barlock at the time that that was my reason.

"I should be obliged if I could be furnished with a list of the customs it is alleged that I have introduced into the regiment against the Commandant's wishes; also copies of the five orders it is alleged that I failed to carry out. I cannot understand this accusation, and can merely deny it. I would also request that this letter be forwarded to the same authority as the letter No. 69 referred to and attached to it.

"I have the honour to be, Sir,

"Your most obedient servant,

"R. C. VAUGHAN, *Major,*

"*Attached 50th P.I.*"

"I'm sorry to have kept you waiting so long, Cunningham," said Vaughan, when he had at last finished. "If you wouldn't mind waiting a little longer while I write it out legibly—well, no. I'll write it out and bring it over to the mess myself."

"I don't mind waiting in the least, sir. The Commandant told me to tell you, sir," Cunningham added after a pause, "that your meals would be served to you in your tent. Barlock, the mess secretary, has given orders to the mess servants accordingly."

Vaughan flushed, but said nothing. He wrote out the letter afresh and gave it to Cunningham.

CHAPTER XV

COLONEL JAYLE'S DECISION

JAYLE waited in his ambush for about an hour, and then, as nothing happened, he realised that the owners of the camels did not intend to try and recover them. All his trouble had merely gained him a few camels which he did not want, and he returned to Barachina rather crestfallen. Jayle hoped that now there was some hope of a little rest. Though it was only eight days since the Purbiah mutiny, they had been eight pretty full days, and a lot had happened in the time. The three surviving British officers were again together at Barachina, and the Purbiah prisoners were rapidly repairing the damage they had done. But the next morning brought still more trouble.

At about nine o'clock in the morning of the next day the fort above Sitoli gave the smoke signal that enemy were approaching, and firing was heard from the direction of the pass. It was impossible to tell which was the most serious attack, so Jardigne and Niaz Mahomed went with a hundred and fifty men to Sitoli, while Dwyre and Nishan Ali went with the same number to the pass. Jayle stayed at Barachina with two hundred men, ready to move to either point, whichever needed his help most.

Jardigne reached Sitoli at eleven o'clock, just as the attack on the fort was developing.

As the attack did not appear to be serious and only a small party of Kolaris seemed to be engaged, Jardigne took it for granted that this was Mahomed Ali's expected reprisal for Niaz Mahomed's treatment of his brother, Akbar Ali. Jardigne's counter-attack soon drove them back, and he sent in word to Jayle at Barachina that he could easily deal with the situation round Sitoli and would not need any further help from Barachina.

Dwyre reached the head of the pass and came in contact with the enemy about a mile south of the point where the Utra track met the main road up the pass. His report reached Jayle at about the same time as Jardigne's, but was not nearly so reassuring. He reported a large force of mutineers, between five hundred and a thousand, advancing up the pass. Dwyre said he would delay them as much as possible and retire gradually to the head of the pass, where he asked Jayle to send all the available reinforcements. Jayle set out at once himself, leaving only fifty men at Barachina to guard the Purbiah prisoners, and sending word to Jardigne to deal with the Sitoli situation as quickly as possible and to return to Barachina, as there was a strong attack developing on the pass.

Dwyre was slowly forced back towards the head of the pass. Nishan Ali knew the ground perfectly for the purposes of a retirement, as he had carried out a retirement under similar circumstances over the same ground only two days before. The tactics

adopted were the same as he had then carried out with Jardigne, with the exception that Dwyre stayed with the rearmost party, instead of with the middle one, as Jardigne had done. It was not on this occasion necessary to regulate the pace of the retirement to a scheduled time, as on the former occasion. The necessity on this occasion was to make the retirement as slow as possible without risk of being surrounded, as the mutineers on this occasion appeared to be trying to achieve this. Dwyre could do this best by himself commanding whichever party was nearest to and in direct contact with the enemy.

Probably Dwyre had a second reason. He wanted to reach the position of influence with the Kolaris that the other two held; and he knew that the only way to do so was by action, not by advice, for the present at least.

At about the Utra path, just as he had given the order to his rearmost party to retire, Dwyre's knee was shattered by a bullet. His men had already retired and did not notice him fall, and he was left behind helpless.

The supposed mutineers advanced and, as Dwyre was on the point of blowing his own brains out to avoid falling into their hands alive, he saw an Englishman in the mutineers' ranks and called out in English. The other came up to Dwyre and looked at him in surprise.

"What are you doing in the ranks of the mutineers?" he asked.

"I might ask the same question of you," answered Dwyre painfully. "We are the loyal remnants of

the 100th Bengal Infantry. We thought you were mutineers."

"Tell your men to stop firing," said the other, and he gave the order to his own men. "I will get two men to carry you over to your own men, and at the same time I will send for my Colonel. In the meantime we will have an armistice; but your men must stay exactly where they are. If they attempt to retire, I shall open fire. Your men will recognise a flag of truce? Right. Then, when my Colonel comes, I will send a flag of truce, and the men who took you over to your men will bring you back. You must in the meantime consider yourself a prisoner of war. Do you agree?"

"Yes," answered Dwyre.

Two men carried Dwyre over to the Kolaris, who had already seen that something unusual was happening and had ceased firing. Dwyre sent word to Nishan Ali to stop the retirement and himself to come back, as the men they had taken for mutineers were not *dushman** after all.

Colonel Barlock had noticed the sudden cessation of fire in front, and had not waited for the message that had been sent back, but came forward himself, meeting the messenger on the way.

"Well, Smythe," he said, when he came up. "What has happened? Why don't you go on, instead of standing about here looking at the mutineers?"

"They're not mutineers at all, sir," answered Smythe. "They are the loyal remnants of the regiment that was up here. I captured one of

* Enemy.

their wounded British officers. I've made an armistice with him, and he has gone over to his own men to stop them retiring. He agreed to return here as soon as you came, and to consider himself a prisoner of war. Will you see him yourself, sir ? I'll send a flag of truce to say you are here."

"Yes," said Colonel Barlock ; and Dwyre was brought over from the Kolari position under a flag of truce.

"Who are you ?" Colonel Barlock asked, when Dwyre was brought over.

"Captain Dwyre, sir, of the 100th Bengal Infantry."

"And who are these men ?"

"Men of the 100th Bengal Infantry, sir."

"Are you in command here ?"

"Yes, sir."

"Are you aware that you are waging war against Her Majesty the Queen ?"

"No, I'm not. Possibly it might be thought that I was a quarter of an hour ago, though unwittingly. So, for the matter of that, were you. In fact, rather more so than in my own case, as you attacked me. I didn't attack you. What I have done I did in self-defence. It is obvious that a mistake has been made, sir ; but I don't see any immediate object in our discussing at present who made the mistake and how it occurred. The point is, things seem rather at a deadlock, and things in general have been moving so quickly with me of late that a deadlock comes as rather a shock to me in my present condition. The question is, what do you propose to do about it ? You are the

senior officer on the spot. If you continue the fight, you will be deliberately waging war against the Queen. The same applies to my men, though not to me. I don't want to wage war against anybody."

Colonel Barlock laughed. "I'm sorry, Dwyre," he said; "I forgot for the moment that you were wounded. The question is certainly difficult and beyond me entirely. I'll send word to the Brigadier, and leave him to decide. In the meantime we had better set about patching up your knee. That will be some excuse for both of us for not arriving at a decision before he comes."

Colonel Barlock sent Cunningham off to fetch the surgeon, and the latter was soon dressing Dwyre's knee.

Jayle halted with the reinforcements he was bringing up for Dwyre at the head of the pass. Here he was hastily disposing his men to support Dwyre in his retirement, when the sound of firing down the pass ceased abruptly. Jayle waited listening for five minutes, then, as the firing was not renewed, he left the majority of his men at the head of the pass and went forward himself cautiously with a few men, to reconnoitre and find out the cause of this sudden cessation of hostilities. He advanced about half a mile down the pass, and there came upon a party of Kolaris sitting about and talking together, but apparently taking no part in the battle. Jayle had dealt with Indians too long to show surprise. He went up to them and asked them what had happened and what they were doing.

"Dwyre Sahib sent word back that the men we

were fighting were not dushman at all, but English," answered one of the Kolaris. "Dwyre Sahib said that we were to remain where we were and not continue the retirement. Nishan Ali has just gone back to him."

This piece of news came as a shock to Jayle. He stood considering the best course for him to take. A British force coming interfering with the present position of things did not suit him at all. Now that they were here, however, and apparently on friendly terms, or at least not actively hostile, Jayle thought the easiest way to get rid of them would be for himself to go forward and meet them. He trusted to his ready tongue to persuade them to go about their business the way they had come, and leave him to go about his. So Jayle went on down the pass to see for himself what had happened, and to try and direct future events into a channel which would leave the position in Kolaristan *in statu quo*.

Colonel Barlock looked up and saw yet another Englishman coming towards him from the Kolaris' position, under a flag of truce.

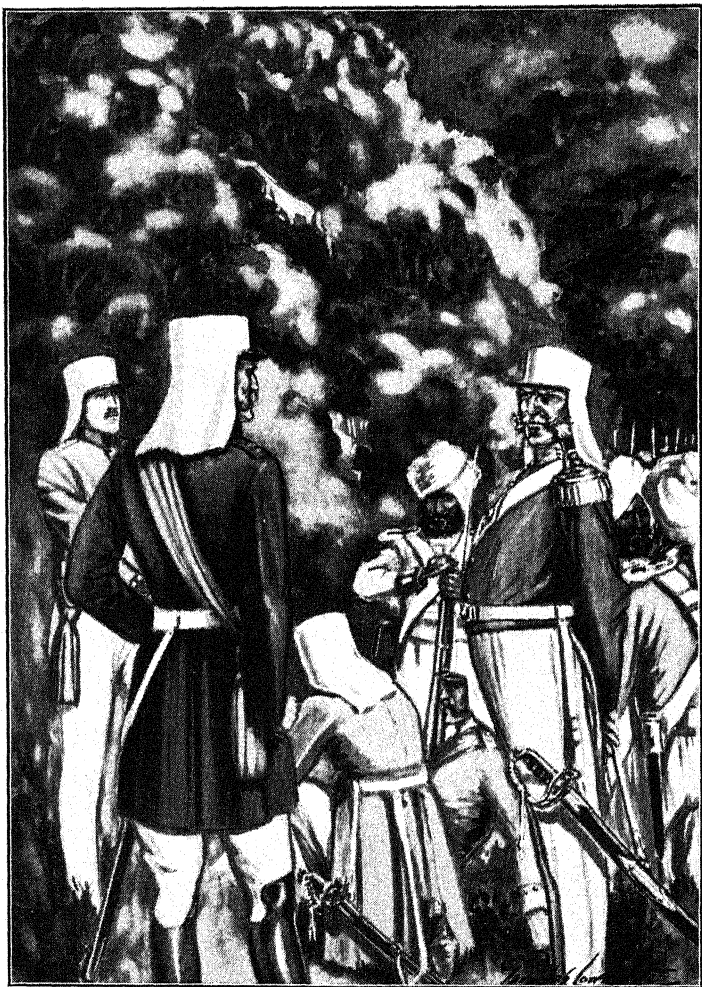
"And who the devil are you?" he asked.

"Colonel Jayle, of the 100th Bengal Infantry. Who the devil are you?"

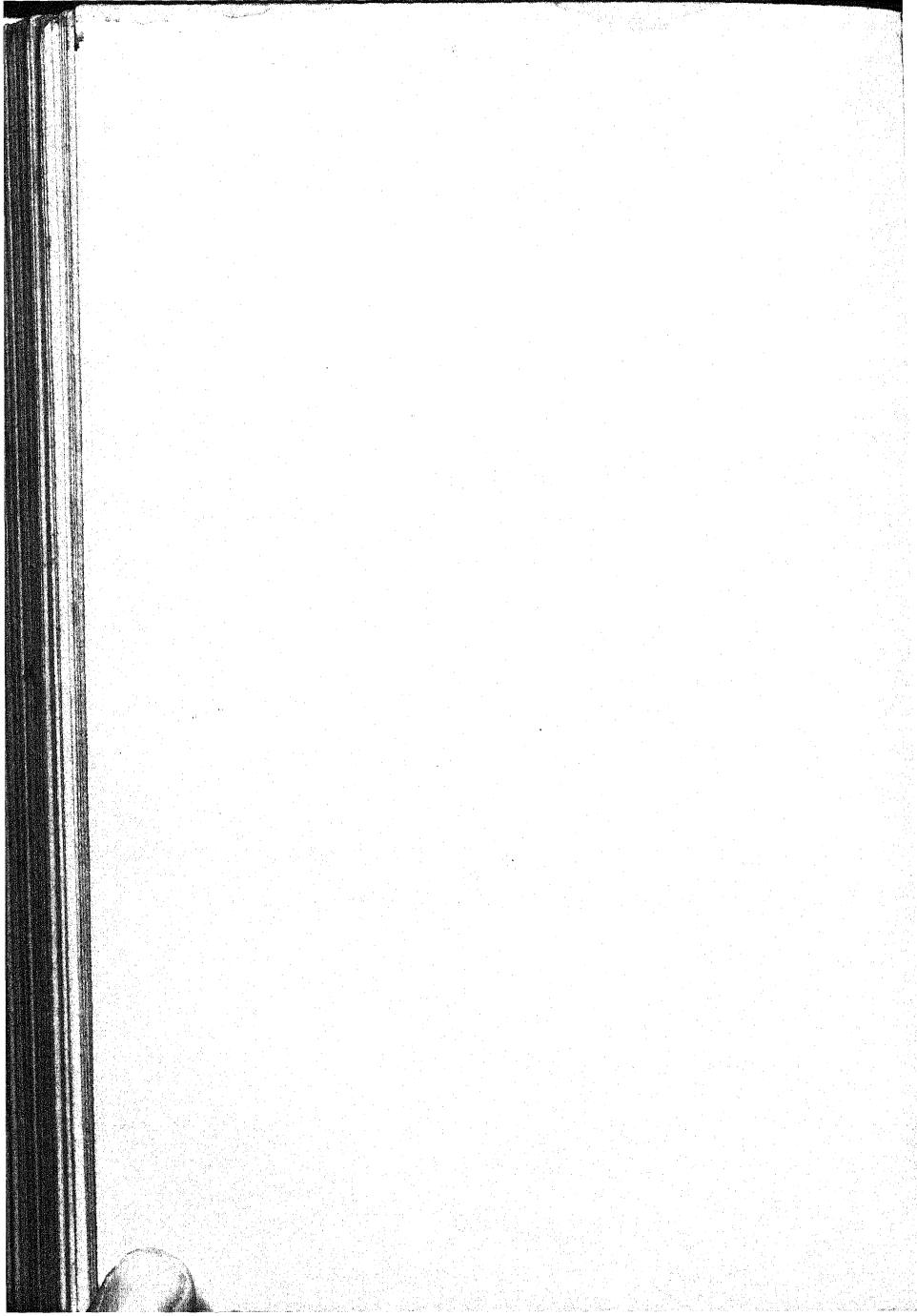
"Colonel Barlock, of the 50th Punjab Infantry. What are you doing here?"

Jayle bowed ironically in acknowledgment of the introduction, and turned to Dwyre.

"Hullo, Dwyre," he said. "Your being hit seems to have put an end to rather an interesting episode. What has happened?"



" Who the devil are you ? "



"There seems to have been some mistake," answered Dwyre. "I have told Colonel Barlock that we are the loyal remnants of the 100th and that we thought his crowd were mutineers. Colonel Barlock says that his men are perfectly loyal subjects of the Queen, and he thought we were mutineers. So that it seems that both sides have been guilty of waging war against Her Majesty, though of course they, as the attackers, are the more guilty party."

"Of course," answered Jayle without moving a muscle.

"You will consider yourself a prisoner of war," said Colonel Barlock, more with a view to interrupting the conversation between Jayle and Dwyre than in the hope that Jayle would really surrender.

"I shall consider myself no such thing," answered Jayle. "I came here under a flag of truce, and I propose to return in the same way—when I choose."

"Captain Dwyre is a prisoner of war, and I cannot allow him to hold communication with a man I must still consider an enemy."

Jayle looked at Dwyre.

"That is so, sir," said Dwyre.

"If you have anything to say," continued Barlock, "you must talk to me."

"Delighted, I'm sure," said Jayle with another bow. "What shall we talk about?"

"I presume you have come here under a flag of truce for some reason. What that reason is you know better than I do. If, however, mere curiosity has led you to come here, it appears to me to be an

unwarrantable abuse of the white flag, and I must ask you to withdraw."

"I assure you it is not mere curiosity that has brought me here. I am the responsible leader of these men, and before I say what I have to say I must satisfy myself that you hold a similar position on this side."

"I do not," answered Barlock. "General Matthews is in command of this force. He will arrive here shortly, I hope."

"I will await his arrival. I will either await him here, or return to my own men, as you please."

"That is as you yourself please. All I insist upon is that you hold no communication with a prisoner of war."

"Certainly. When I spoke to Captain Dwyre, I was not aware he was a prisoner of war. I trust Captain Dwyre's wound is not serious," he added, turning to the surgeon.

"No, sir," replied the surgeon. "There is no danger to life and, as far as it is humanly possible to judge, it appears to me that the wound will heal satisfactorily. Captain Dwyre will probably be slightly lame for the rest of his life—that is all."

At this moment General Matthews bustled up. "What's all this, Barlock?" he asked. "What has happened? Who are you?" he added, catching sight of Jayle for the first time.

"Colonel Jayle, sir, commanding the loyal remnants of the 100th Bengal Infantry."

"But we heard your regiment had mutinied."

"Half mutinied and half remained loyal. There was a fight, and the loyal half consisting of Kolaris

defeated the mutineers, consisting of Purbiahs. But, before discussing that, may I ask, sir, whether you have adequate arrangements to protect your rear ? ”

“ Not more than ordinary. Why ? ”

“ There was a large body of mutineers near the mouth of this pass, led by one Abbas Ali,” answered Jayle. “ They attacked me in considerable force the day before yesterday, and I had a good deal of difficulty in driving them back. In fact, when your attack opened, I immediately took it for granted that you were the same mutineers reinforced from Meerut.”

General Matthews looked concerned at first—then he brightened up.

“ I see. Thanks for telling me,” he said. “ I’ll send a regiment back to hold the mouth of the pass. James, tell Colonel Jackson this with my compliments, and ask him to take his regiment back and hold the mouth of the pass. Who did you say was the leader of these mutineers ? ”

“ Abbas Ali. We captured about thirty of his men when we drove them back through the pass the day before yesterday.”

“ Abbas Ali . . . Abbas Ali ? Why, that was the man who brought me the information that your regiment had mutinied. Barlock, what was the name of the scoundrel who gave us that information about the regiment at Barachina ? Abbas Ali ? ”

“ No, sir. Akbar Ali.”

Jayle started, and General Matthews noticed his look of surprise. “ Oh, yes ; Akbar Ali ” he said. “ Do you know him ? ”

"Was he a man decidedly below the average height, with a closely cut beard and a very big moustache?"

"Yes, that's the man."

"He is a notorious Kolar dacoit," answered Jayle. "Shortly after quelling the mutiny here I caught him red-handed in a raid on the plains. This is his revenge, I suppose."

"Well, one good turn deserves another. Have you got adequate protection in your rear? Because the arrangement between myself and this Akbar Ali was that I should attack up the pass, while he attacked you from the north."

Jayle smiled. "That attack has failed," he said. "I sent a party to deal with it, and I have since received a report from them that they have the situation well in hand."

"Good. When did the mutiny occur at Barachina?"

"On the last of last month."

"Did you have any difficulty in quelling it?"

"No. It was quelled at once. The regiment consisted half of Kolaris and half of Purbiahs. The two sections did not get on together particularly well, and when the Purbiahs mutinied the Kolaris turned on them. The whole thing didn't last more than two or three hours."

"That is nine days ago. I don't understand why you are still here. Why didn't you move against Meerut? You must have heard of the mutiny there."

"Yes. But this regiment was raised for a particular purpose three years ago, namely, to put

down dacoity in Kolaristan. I raised it myself. Up to the time the Purbiahs mutinied I certainly did not consider it advisable to move the regiment against Purbiah mutineers. I did not trust the Purbiahs."

"But it's nine days since you quelled the mutiny here. I should have thought you would have joined some British force moving against Meerut."

"I heard a rumour that a force was moving from the Punjab against the mutineers at Meerut. This apparently must have been yourselves. I was marching down to join you when, as I said, I was attacked by a large force of mutineers under Abbas Ali. It was only with the greatest difficulty that I drove them out of the pass only the day before yesterday."

"But, having driven them out of the pass, I still don't see why you didn't continue your march to join me."

"The Kolaris are hillmen. In the pass all the advantages lay with them. But the Purbiahs outnumbered me by at least three to one, and, if I had followed them into the plains, all the advantages would have been with them. I was merely waiting for definite information of your force. Up till then I had only rumour to go upon."

General Matthews was beginning to regard Jayle with a certain amount of suspicion.

"Well," he said, after a slight pause, "you can join my brigade now. Collect your men and march them down the pass to the deserted village. Colonel Barlock's regiment will accompany you and show

you the camp I mean. I will march with one regiment to Barachina."

"If I might offer a suggestion, sir, the Kolaris will be much more valuable to the British Army by remaining here in their hills and guarding the left flank of the force coming up from the Punjab than in the plains where they would lose all fighting value from sickness. If my Kolaris join your brigade, the whole of Kolaristan will revert to what it was three years ago, and men like Akbar Ali would be a constant source of danger to the left flank of the British Army; and, when the mutiny is finally quelled, then Kolaristan would have to be reconquered. The addition of my small force to your brigade would not outweigh these disadvantages."

"If I might make a suggestion," answered General Matthews after a pause, "you claim to be a loyal soldier of Her Majesty the Queen, and your obvious reluctance to join my brigade I cannot regard as anything but suspicious."

"I am sorry to have aroused your suspicions," said Jayle with perfect truth. "I am certainly not in the least unwilling to join your brigade. I only considered it my duty, knowing this country and its inhabitants as I do, to point out this to you. I have done so, and if you still wish my wing of Kolaris to join your brigade, we will do so willingly."

"But there is one thing I ought to have told you before I unfortunately aroused your suspicions. I have over six hundred Purbiah prisoners at Barachina. Owing to this double attack they are at the present moment guarded by only fifty

Kolaris. If my men go down to the plains and one of your regiments goes to Barachina, these fifty Kolaris will not know what has happened. They will think you are Purbiah mutineers, and either resist you—which would be unfortunate and cause unnecessary bloodshed, or leave Barachina and make for the hills, in which case the Purbiah prisoners will either arm themselves and resist you, or else make for the hills also—which would be still more unfortunate, as it would take you weeks to round them up.”

“There are two things you must bear in mind, Colonel Jayle,” answered General Matthews. “First, I am only the advanced guard of the force moving on Delhi. My orders are to disperse any band of mutineers I may hear of. That is why I came out of my way to attack you. As you know, the information I received was that you were mutineers. For the same reason I cannot stay here any longer than is absolutely necessary; I must get back to my position as advanced guard to the main army. Second, it is my intention that you and your Kolaris form part of my brigade, until I have reported the whole matter to the Commander-in-Chief. If he agrees with you, then you and your Kolaris will return to Kolaristan with my best wishes for your success. If you do not mind waiting here for a while, I will discuss with Colonel Barlock here the best way of carrying out both these essentials”

“Certainly, sir; if you have no objection to my discussing the position with Captain Dwyre.”

General Matthews agreed to this, and then took Barlock aside.

"Now, Dwyre," said Jayle, when the other two had left. "Tell me exactly what has happened so far. I have only been able to gather what I could from the General's remarks."

"Nishan Ali was retiring slowly when I brought up the reinforcements," answered Dwyre. "Just as we had vacated the position where we are now I was wounded and fell. I was just going to blow my brains out, when I saw an Englishman amongst the ranks of the mutineers, as I thought. So it came out that neither of us were mutineers. We made an armistice, and were really discussing who was most to blame when you came up. But there shouldn't be any difficulty about joining the brigade now."

"Yes, but the question is how? You know as well as I do that the Kolaris won't lay down their arms. General Matthews obviously distrusts us, and his men will distrust the Kolaris; and the Kolaris will resent it and there'll be trouble. It would be quite all right done carefully. But, unfortunately, I don't think the General will do it carefully, and he won't listen to anything I suggest.

"However, here he comes. We'll see what his suggestion is, and if it is at all feasible, and not absolutely certain to lead to trouble, we must accept it without raising more suspicions in his mind. But if I think it is not feasible I shall certainly tell him so, whatever the result may be. I think I have a scheme, but he will have to discuss it with an open mind."

"I don't trust this Colonel Jayle at all," said General Matthews, after he had taken Barlock aside.

"Neither do I," replied Colonel Barlock "You would trust him still less had you been present when he first came up. I was talking to the wounded man; he seemed honest enough. When this Colonel Jayle came up, he tried to pump the other as to what had happened. I stopped that, and Jayle seemed very nervous and wanted to go back to his Kolaris. I prevented that, too, as I think that if he had done so the action would have commenced again. I kept him there until you arrived, but during that time everything he said and did aroused my suspicions."

General Matthews knew Barlock, and this speech of his lessened rather than increased his suspicions of Jayle. It was perfectly natural that Jayle should wish to speak to his wounded officer and ask how it had happened. When he had come up relations between the two Colonels had seemed a bit strained. Jayle was already out of temper when he met him, and a man who was out of temper often said things that would ordinarily sound suspicious without meaning them. He would try the effect of a little more tactful attitude towards Jayle.

"I have thought of a way out of the present deadlock, Jayle," he said when he rejoined him. "If you can suggest a better which covers the two essentials which I have already told you, we will discuss it. I propose that you send word in to Barachina by one of your Kolaris and tell your men there what has happened. One of my regi-

ments will march to Barachina and take over the Purbiah prisoners there. My remaining two regiments, with your Kolar wing, will march back to our camp on the plains. Your men must give up their arms now, but they will be returned to them when we get to camp out of the hills. That is the only plan I can think of that carries out the two essentials. Can you suggest a better plan ? ”

“ Your plan, sir,” answered Jayle, “ does not cover the second essential. Less than half my wing is present here. The greater part are either fighting Akbar Ali, or are in other detachments. Over and above this, if one of the Kolaris went back and told those at Barachina what has happened and what you propose to do, they would never give up their arms. They would make straight for the hills, and leave the Purbiah prisoners to do the same if they chose.

“ I think I have a plan which has fewer disadvantages. I suggest that I and my wing, or as many as are here, join your brigade at once here, and that you move your whole brigade to Barachina. I myself will go forward to Barachina and tell the Kolaris there what has happened. I can keep them together, as they know I trust them and they trust me. You cannot get your brigade back through the pass to-day before dark, so you may as well have them concentrated at Barachina for the night. I can in the meantime collect my outlying parties and, in the morning, you can march your whole brigade, with the Purbiah prisoners, through the pass.

“ Your brigade will then be concentrated on the

plains no later than it would be by the plan you suggest. You must remember Abbas Ali's mutineers have still to be accounted for, and your plan necessitates part of your march with a weak detachment through the pass and out on to the plain in the dark. I understand why you say the Kolaris must be disarmed ; but I think I can show you that it is unnecessary. The Kolaris would obviously resent it, and to do so would diminish their value to you later as a fighting unit. My men are all armed with muzzle-loaders, and it would to all intents and purposes disarm them if they discharged their muskets before starting. This would avoid the resentment that would undoubtedly be caused by their having to give up their arms."

"Yes," said General Matthews, after considering Jayle's proposal. "Your plan certainly has advantages over mine, and I think all the essentials are carried out. How much further does this pass go ?"

"Only about half a mile, sir."

"Very well, then. Will you go and explain to your Kolaris and get them collected here. Discharge your muskets into the hill over there. Then we will start the march to Barachina. One of my regiments will lead. Then will come the Kolari wing. Then my other two regiments. Then Jackson's regiment as rearguard. Will you get the necessary orders issued for that, James ? As soon as we are clear of the pass you will ride forward and arrange our triumphal entry into Barachina, Jayle."

Jayle saluted, and went back to the Kolaris and

told Nishan Ali to collect them all on the road there; that he, Jayle, had arranged everything satisfactorily, and that the whole force was going to Barachina for the night. The only stipulation General Matthews had made was that they should discharge their muskets before they marched back to Barachina. Nishan Ali set about collecting the Kolaris, while Jayle went back to where General Matthews was standing.

"I have told one of the Kolari native officers to explain things to the men," he said. "He can do it better than I could. They are a curious crowd. Perhaps Dwyre has already told you about the mutiny? No? Well, it will give you some idea of the present position if I tell you. The Kolaris, I believe, knew the mutiny was going to happen all along, and deliberately kidnapped me just before it broke out. Dwyre was out shooting at the time, and his escape was a pure accident. The Kolaris took me into the hills, and for some time I thought it was the Kolaris who had mutinied. But when they quelled the mutiny they brought me back to Barachina, and since then I have run the regiment there as if nothing had happened. But the fact remains that I believe it was out of personal regard for myself that I was saved.

"The Kolaris do not seem to have made the least attempt to save the lives of the other British officers. So, you see, my position since the mutiny has not been that of an ordinary Commandant, with the powers of military discipline behind him, but rather that of a respected guest. The position is rather difficult to understand until you have

tried it. I think that is how I came to give you the impression of being unwilling to join your brigade. It is not that I am personally unwilling to do so. Far from it. It was that I doubted my ability to persuade the Kolaris to do so. It was a matter of persuading rather than ordering. However, there was no difficulty about that. They have such a hatred of the Purbiah that they jumped at the idea of joining your brigade to have a go at them.

"But I think it is just as well that you should know the exact position. They have lost a good deal of their military discipline during the past eight days. But I think, if you can leave details to me just at first, and do not expect too much, they will soon recover from the effects of the last week's rather unorthodox discipline. I have managed to keep them together as an organised unit during that critical period, and it will indeed be remarkable if I cannot do the same as part of an organised and disciplined brigade."

This somewhat garbled version of the mutiny at Barachina and the present attitude of the Kolaris quite dispelled General Matthew's vanishing suspicions. General Matthews chuckled and, taking Jayle by the arm, walked with him towards where the Kolaris were collected on the road ready to discharge their muskets into the opposite hill.

"I think you will find military discipline all through the Army different from what you knew it," he said to Jayle, as they walked arm-in-arm towards the Kolaris. "Don't be so stand-offish, man. I apologise for my rudeness and suspicion.

Try and appear to be affable. I want to show the Kolaris I trust you, and them. That's better. What was I talking about? Oh, yes; military discipline. My views are now entirely different anyhow. All my regiments are irregulars. No strait-laced discipline. Leave it all to C.O.'s. Your men won't be unique. I'll trust you to ask for help if you want it. If you don't ask for it, I'll know you don't want it. That your view?"

"Absolutely."

"Well, here we are. They look as if they could fight. Is this all? I rather fancy my brigade, but they have fought a good rearguard action against ten times their number. Kolaris are all Mahomedans, aren't they? Introduce me to the native officer, will you?"

Jayle introduced Nishan Ali.

"Salaam, Jemadar Sahib," said General Matthews, shaking hands with Nishan Ali. "It is most unfortunate that until an hour ago we thought you were dushman. I hope that your casualties have not been very heavy?"

"No, sahib. But I hear that Captain Dwyre Sahib is wounded. I hope it is not serious?"

"No; the Surgeon Sahib says it is not at all serious. It is possible that Dwyre Sahib will be lame; but it is also possible that he will recover altogether. But where are your casualties? The Surgeon Sahib had better see them."

"Our casualties have been few, sahib, and the wounded have already been dressed. They are at the head of the pass. I trust Your Honour's men have not suffered?"

"One cannot fight hillmen in the hills without losing casualties," General Matthews answered. Then he turned to Jayle and, acknowledging Nishan Ali's salute, added, "Before giving the order to discharge your muskets, Jayle, let us stroll down the line and talk to the men here and there. I want to see them and I want them to see me."

This they did, and General Matthews stood by Jayle's side when he gave the order to present at the hill opposite and fire a volley. And then the march of the whole brigade to Barachina commenced.

Jayle rode alone at the head of the Kolaris, deep in thought. The change in General Matthews' attitude towards himself had brought about a corresponding change in his own, and he thought that it would perhaps be best after all to join this brigade with his Kolaris. That he could do so if he wished, he had not the least doubt. But he could as easily persuade the Kolaris to go with Jardigne and leave him in Kolaristan.

General Matthews seemed to be a sound soldier and a gentleman, but Colonel Barlock and himself seemed already to have cultivated a mutual dislike. At the same time he saw no reason why he, at his age, should change the whole course of his life because he happened to meet one man whom he could respect. Deep in this reverie, he arrived at the head of the pass, and he now rode forward to General Matthews, at the head of the column, who had just reached the Ag.

"Shall I ride forward to Barachina now, sir?" he said as he rode up. "Seeing a large force like

this coming from the direction of the pass, the Kolaris might take to the hills, and then the Purbiah mutineers would escape."

"Very well. I'll halt the brigade here and let them have a meal. This is a curious rock. Anyhow, it gives a certain amount of shade."

"Yes," answered Jayle. "It is a rock with a history too. As far as I know, only two British officers have ever climbed to the top, and Dwyre is one. He spent the night of the mutiny on the top of this rock, and delayed the defeated mutineers just sufficiently for me to cut them off at the pass. But ask him about it. He can tell you the story better than I."

Jayle rode on to Barachina and told the Kolaris there what he had already told Nishan Ali. As soon as he had finished explaining to the man left in command there that the Purbiah prisoners were to be handed over to General Matthews, a man came up to him with a note from Jardigne. Jayle opened and read it.

"Your order received. If attack at pass is serious, I cannot possibly arrive in time to be of any use. Situation well in hand here; but it will take time to finish this lot off. Quite useless to leave this half-finished. Niaz Mahomed suggests sending word to Barachina to bring all Purbiah prisoners to Sitoli and desert Barachina. Please issue orders for this if you approve. Dwyre should retire via Utra to Sitoli without going on to the Barachina plain, leaving road to Barachina open. Mutineers certain to go to Barachina. If they

advance from there we can resist them at Sitoli. If not, we can cut them off at the pass as we did after the mutiny here. As soon as I have dealt with this lot I will take up a position overlooking the plain and covering Sitoli.

“D. J. JARDIGNE.”

Jayle had no intention of remaining at Barachina himself. The arrival of Jardigne's note furnished him with a convenient excuse for accounting to General Matthews for not finding him at Barachina when he arrived there. His immediate intention was to persuade a certain number of Kolaris, with Jardigne, to join this brigade, but to retain sufficient with himself to continue the work no one else was capable of carrying on in his absence, namely, the suppression of dacoity and the maintenance of law and order in Kolaristan. He was perfectly sure that, when the position was, as General Matthews intended, reported to the Commander-in-Chief, his action would be approved, and Jardigne and the Kolaris who had gone with him would return to Kolaristan. He added the following remark at the foot of Jardigne's note, and gave it back to the Kolari who had brought it, telling him to give it to the General Sahib when he reached Barachina :

“The above just received from Jardigne. ‘Mutineers’ referred to are yourselves. ‘This lot’ is Akbar Ali, who was attacked from the north. It is no great loss if Jardigne has satisfactorily ‘finished him off,’ as he and his band are out-and-

out scoundrels. I have ridden out to tell him the present position and bring him and his men back to Barachina. I have left instructions with the Kolaris here to hand over the Purbiah prisoners to you, and themselves to join Nishan Ali.

“C. F. JAYLE.”

Jayle then rode out to meet Jardigne at Sitoli.

CHAPTER XVI

THE SITAPANI MASSACRE

AKBAR was surprised at the resistance which his attack met. His original intention had been to attack Sitoli before reinforcements could be sent there, and, after capturing that post, to remain on the defensive, letting his opponents waste their strength in trying to drive him back until the attack of his British allies up the pass forced Jayle to concentrate all his available forces there. Akbar Ali then intended to advance on Barachina and get there first if he could, sack the place, and get away into the hills before his allies, for whom he would then have no further use, could interfere. This would both give him his revenge on Jayle and Niaz Mahomed, and at the same time leave him the leader of the strongest band in the district.

When he found his attack so strongly opposed, he had to give up the idea of reaching Barachina first and sacking it. But the position still had its compensations. Time was on his side and he ceased to press his attack with any vigour. The British were advancing up the pass, and the more of Jayle's men there were opposing him at Sitoli, the less there would be to meet the attack from the

other direction. All he had to do was to stay where he was until the time when the resistance to him must eventually slacken, and then he could advance without risk.

Akbar soon found that he could not even hold his present ground. Jayle's Kolaris seemed to be taking the initiative and attacking him. Well, so much the better. The further they followed him into the hills away from Barachina, the greater would be their difficulty in getting back to defend the place from the British attack when the necessity arose, as it must do soon. Akbar did not intend to lose men unnecessarily by making a desperate resistance, so he gave ground wherever the pressure was heaviest. If in this way Jayle allowed himself to be enticed further and further into the hills, the greater fool he, or whoever it was pressing the attack.

Jardigne persisted in this suicidal policy until he received Jayle's order to break off the engagement and move as many men as he safely could to meet the attack in the pass. He told Niaz Mahomed of this, and he was in favour of doing as Jayle said. But Jardigne pointed out that they had already come so far that they could not possibly reach the pass in time to be of any use. They might just as well finish up the job on hand. So, after a little more discussion with Niaz Mahomed Jardigne sent the reply which Jayle received when he reached Barachina.

"These people are working on an arranged plan with those attacking at the pass," said Jardigne to Niaz Mahomed when he had sent off his reply

to Jayle. "They know of the attack at the pass, and are retiring in front of us to entice us further and further into the hills, so that we will have the further to go back when we have to, to meet the attack from the south. But perhaps you have not noticed that I have been putting all the pressure in on their north flank. We have only to advance very little more there and we will have them trapped in the bend of the Sitapani river."

Akbar Ali had no difficulty in continuing to entice his opponents further and further from Barachina, and he did not notice the trap into which he was walking until it was too late. He found himself with an impassable river behind him and on both flanks and a considerably superior force in front. He made a desperate effort to break out again the way he had come, but the door of the trap was now closed, and he was driven back with heavy loss further into the bend of the river.

He then tried to surrender. But as soon as Niaz Mahomed found out who it was who had brought about this double attack on his band he was furious. He sent the messenger back with the reply that Akbar Ali must himself come and surrender unconditionally. The messenger returned rather crestfallen, and Niaz Mahomed at once reopened a brisk fire. The other side waved furiously, and when Niaz Mahomed had given the order to cease firing, he watched Akbar Ali being ignominiously hustled forward towards him by his own men. When he came within reach Niaz Mahomed seized him by his little bit of a beard,

and at the same time sent his followers scuttling back the way they had come. Akbar Ali fell on his knees and begged for his life, but Niaz Mahomed in his rage only shook him by the beard until Akbar Ali roared with pain. At last Niaz Mahomed let him go, and Akbar Ali remained whining on the ground before him.

"Did you not swear on the Koran never to come into my territory again?" Niaz Mahomed asked, when he had controlled his fury sufficiently to be able to speak coherently.

Akbar Ali made no reply.

"Did I not swear on the Koran that if I ever saw you again I would kill you?"

Still Akbar Ali made no reply.

"Because you have broken your oath, do you think I shall break mine?"

Jardigne, who had been watching this little drama in silence, heard a sound behind him and, turning, saw Jayle walking towards him, leading his pony.

"What has happened?" Jardigne asked anxiously, afraid lest Jayle's sudden appearance should mean that the new force of rebels were at hand, and that he was too late even to hold Sitoli.

"Everything is all right," answered Jayle, to relieve Jardigne's obvious anxiety. He then turned and recognised Akbar Ali, and a hard look passed over his face. "The enemy we thought were mutineers were not. They are a British force with whom Akbar Ali somehow got into touch. Akbar Ali told them we were mutineers. Each side

thought the others were mutineers, and it was not till Dwyre was wounded and captured by the other side that the mistake was discovered."

"What was that?" Niaz Mahomed asked. He had heard Akbar's name, and judged from Jayle's face that it was nothing to his advantage. Jayle repeated in the Kolari dialect what he had already told Jardigne. When Akbar Ali heard it, he realised that he had no hope now that his life would be spared, and with this knowledge his courage seemed to return. He rose to his feet. Niaz Mahomed's blind fury, too, had changed during the recital to a quiet but no less deadly anger. He turned to one of the men standing near and told him to fetch two lengths of rope. Akbar Ali's arms were bound behind his back, he was hoisted onto a pony, and one end of the rope fastened round his neck. The other end of the rope was fastened round the bough of a tree, in full view of the men of his gang. Then the pony was led from under him, and he was hanged.

His followers stood aghast, watching the hanging of their leader without lifting a hand to rescue him. Even after the final leading away the pony from under him, his followers stood fascinated, watching his dangling corpse, until a sudden burst of fire from Niaz Mahomed's men brought those whom it did not kill back to a sense of their present surroundings. This volley, following on the hanging of their leader before their eyes, was too much for them altogether, and they turned and fled. Niaz Mahomed started off in pursuit. Jardigne made a movement as if to interfere, but Jayle

restrained him. "It is better so," he said. "Leave it to Niaz Mahomed."

And it was left to Niaz Mahomed. Those of Akbar Ali's men who escaped Niaz Mahomed's steel were drowned in the Sitapani river. Not one escaped.

While this massacre was going on Jayle gave Jardigne a full account of what had happened at the pass. "Now, what do you propose to do?" he asked, when he had finished.

"Join this brigade, of course."

"Do you think the Kolaris will do so willingly?"

"Yes, if you do."

"And if I don't?"

"But you will. What else can you do?"

"I can stay in these hills, where I have lived for the last thirty years. What would be the effect in Kolaristan if I went with the brigade? You obviously want to join this brigade, and for you it is the only thing to do. Do you think the Kolaris will go with you?"

"A certain number will, if they are not coerced. If an attempt is made to make them all go, none will go; they will all desert. But if you are going to stay up here, I shall too. I think I have enjoyed this last week more than any other year of my life."

"No, you can't stay. The life of a dacoit for a week is all right; there is still the novelty. But the novelty soon wears off. I have tried it, and it is not a career I would recommend to a young man like yourself. I am old now, and cannot alter the natural course of the life I am accustomed to

But, whether you now think you would like that life or not, I will certainly not be a party to starting you on it. Circumstances over which neither of us had any control have made you a dacoit for a week. I hope it will be a pleasant memory to you ; that is all. You have your career in the Army to think of, also your people at home. So, whatever I do, you must join this brigade. You have not my reasons for not doing so. Firstly, for your own sake. Secondly, for the sake of your Kolaris ; without your guidance they will do something rash, and this brigade will remain a nuisance in Kolaristan for goodness knows how long. And, thirdly, for my sake.

"If you have any regard for me," he went on, "remember that the thought that I had brought you into this would cloud the few remaining years of my life. Leave me to enjoy the short remainder of my life in my own way, without clouding it with the thought that I was responsible for the ruin of your career as well as my own. For these three reasons, you must join this brigade and fight the mutineers until all vestige of this mutiny is quelled. Then you can bring your Kolaris back in triumph to Kolaristan, where you will always find a welcome whether I'm alive or not. Do you agree ? "

"Yes, sir," answered Jardigne. "But why can't you come too ? "

"If I come, Kolaristan will revert to what it was three years ago. Besides, I am an old man, and the channel of my life has set in this groove. I should be a dismal failure under military dis-

cipline. This last week has sounded the call to me of the old existence that suits me best, and I cannot avoid answering the call. I tried to change my mind when I found that the Brigadier of this brigade is really an officer and a gentleman; but the old call was too strong. However, I will send a letter by you to General Matthews. He will understand. I will give you one last piece of advice and warning to remember me by. General Matthews is a gentleman, and you can trust him as you would trust me. Colonel Barlock—remember the name—is a blackguard. Avoid him as you would Akbar Ali's ghost.

"Our 'dacoit police' have now reached the turning point. If we both join this brigade, Kolaristan will again become a nest of dacoits. I must remain behind to consolidate what we have done since the mutiny. Left to his own devices Niaz Mahomed would undo everything, simply because he does not realise that what has been done so far has been furthering a scheme of which he knows nothing. But for the interference of this brigade, in another week I could have persuaded Niaz Mahomed definitely to accept the rôle of 'dacoit police.' So far he has done it of his own accord without realising it. But here is Niaz Mahomed coming back. I will ride forward to Sitoli and write my letter to General Matthews. You come along with Niaz Mahomed and his men and meet me there. But don't say anything to him of what I have been talking to you about just now."

On arrival at Sitoli Jayle wrote this letter for

Jardigne to deliver to General Matthews at Barachina :

"DEAR GENERAL MATTHEWS,

"I very much regret that I have had to deceive you as to my intentions ; but I can assure you that it is as much in your own interest as mine that I have decided myself not to join your brigade.

"Perhaps you are not aware that I am not a soldier in the ordinary acceptance of the term. I retired from the British Army in 1816, and was given a commission as Lieutenant-Colonel in the Company's service when the Kolari Regiment was raised in 1855. Between these dates for nearly forty years I lived the life of an adventurer, for the most part in Kolaristan itself.

"I now find the call back to the old life too strong.

"I recommend Lieutenant Jardigne to your notice. Though he is little more than a boy, he has a vast influence with the Kolaris. I strongly recommend your leaving the command of the Kolaris with him. He is thoroughly trustworthy, and the events of the past week have brought to the surface all the good, and eliminated what defects there were in him due to extreme youth. If, however, you should consider him too young for the responsibility, the officer placed in command of the Kolaris should be one who is not too proud to take the advice of a boy, who knows considerably more about the Kolaris than most men.

"I am convinced that all my qualities, good

and bad, are such as to make me of more value to the British cause by remaining as I am in Kolaristan, keeping a turbulent country on the flank of the British line of advance from the Punjab quiet, than by accepting any military position in the Army under military discipline.

"I trust you will be able to see this in the same light as I do, and accept my heartfelt wishes for a speedy and successful conclusion of this campaign against the mutineers.

"I am,

"Yours faithfully,

"C. F. JAYLE."

When Jardigne's little army reached Sitoli, Jayle collected all the Kolaris on the hillside where they could all hear him.

"The Purbiah mutiny is not yet suppressed," he said to them. "You have eaten the *Sarkar's** salt and, when the Purbiahs mutinied here, you suppressed the mutiny and defeated them. Now a British force is at Barachina, and is leaving to-morrow to fight the Purbiahs. It will be a great shame to me and to you if as many Kolaris as possible do not go with them to help suppress this mutiny. I am an old man and will remain in Kolaristan. Jardigne Sahib will accompany this force against the Purbiahs. In this letter, which Jardigne Sahib will give to the British General Sahib, I have written that, though I am an old man and cannot accompany him myself, Jardigne Sahib will accompany him with five

Government.

hundred of the young men of Kolaristan to help defeat the Purbiah mutineers. It is, therefore, my wish that all the young men, and as many of the old men as wish to, should go with Jardigne Sahib. Then when the mutiny is suppressed the Sarkar will remember that the Kolaris helped to suppress it, and I shall be here to welcome your triumphant return. Then the Sarkar will be pleased with the Kolaris. But if as many Kolaris as possible do not accompany this British force, then, when the mutiny is suppressed, the Sarkar will remember that the Kolaris had eaten the Sarkar's salt, but when they had the opportunity to join a British force and help the Sarkar fight its enemies they did not take the opportunity. Then, when the mutiny is suppressed, the Sarkar will remember that the Kolaris showed themselves to be enemies instead of friends.

"And instead of a regiment composed only of Kolaris there will be sent regiments of Sikhs and Mahrattas to hold Kolaristan as if it were an enemy's country. The remedy lies in your hands. I have spoken."

"I, too, am an old man," said Niaz Mahomed. "I have been with Jayle Sahib longer than any of you remember. It is my wish to stay with Jayle Sahib; but it is also my wish that the Kolaris should now act in such a way as to make Kolaristan independent when this mutiny is suppressed. As Jayle Sahib has said, the only way is for the Kolaris to fight on the side of the Sarkar. I say, therefore, that only twenty men shall remain with Jayle Sahib and myself. The remainder will

accompany Jardigne Sahib. And if any give cause to blacken Jardigne Sahib's face, he shall answer to me. I swear by the Koran that if any man fails in his duty to Jardigne Sahib and the Sarkar, he will die a thousand deaths. I have spoken."

Jayle was both surprised and pleased at the attitude Niaz Mahomed had suddenly taken up, and he left the choosing of the twenty who were to remain to him. When these had been decided upon, Niaz Mahomed called on the rest to swear loyalty to the British cause. This they did willingly enough, and Jardigne, after shaking hands with Jayle and Niaz Mahomed, marched his little force back to Barachina



"If any give cause to blacken Jardigne Sahib's face, he shall answer to me."

CHAPTER XVII

JAYLE REVERSES HIS DECISION

GENERAL MATTHEWS halted his force at the Ag, and gave orders that the men were to be allowed a meal. He then rode to where Dwyre was being carried on a dhooly and asked him the history of the Ag.

"Yes, sir," said Dwyre, "I have climbed that rock in the dark. But I wouldn't care to do it again in daylight. When we heard of the mutiny, Jardigne and myself were at the pass, and we came here with Jardigne's orderly, Fazl Ali. Fazl Ali is probably here and he could show you the way we went up."

General Matthews rode over to the Kolaris and asked Nishan Ali if Fazl Ali, Jardigne Sahib's orderly, was with him. Fazl Ali heard the question and stepped out of the ranks and saluted.

"Were you Jardigne Sahib's orderly?" General Matthews asked.

"Yes, sahib."

"Did he and Dwyre Sahib and you climb that rock in the dark?"

"Yes, sahib."

"Can you show me the way up?"

"Yes, sahib."

The two went round to the other side of the

rock. Fazl Ali suggested that the General should take off his boots, but he only laughed. Fazl Ali then led the way and General Matthews followed, cautiously at first; but the rock was firm and sound, and he had spent a lot of his leave rock climbing. When they had climbed about twenty feet and the going became slightly easier General Matthews became careless. He did not make absolutely sure of the hold with his left foot before putting his weight on it and moving his right. His left foot slipped. He hung for a second or two on his hands; then he recovered his foothold with his right foot, just as Fazl Ali gripped his wrist. But General Matthews now found he could not put any weight on his left foot. The slip and subsequent recovery had sprained his ankle.

Nishan Ali had been watching the two and saw at once some accident had happened. But the pair were hidden by the rock from the men nearest to them who could have been of any assistance. Nishan Ali and half a dozen Kolaris came up to help them, and with a good deal of difficulty got General Matthews to the bottom. Here they laid him as comfortably as they could on the ground while Nishan Ali went to fetch the surgeon. No one appeared to have noticed that there was anything amiss, and General Matthews warned Nishan Ali not to appear hurried or excited, but merely to ask the Surgeon Sahib to come over. It was probably nothing at all serious and would be all right in an hour or two.

The surgeon arrived and cut the boot off, and the ankle began to swell at once. Matthews sent

for James, the brigade staff officer and, when he found that he was really incapacitated from active duty, told him to tell Colonel Barlock, who was the senior regimental commander, what had happened. So General Matthews finished the march into Barachina in a dhooly, while Colonel Barlock assumed command of the brigade for the triumphal entry. But there did not appear to be anything triumphal about it. Colonel Barlock was met by the Kolaris orderly, who gave him Jardigne's message with Jayle's message written at the bottom of it.

Colonel Barlock set about taking over the Purbiah prisoners, and by the time General Matthews reached Barachina this had been completed. The General at once asked for Jayle, and Barlock told him that Jayle was not at Barachina when he arrived. But he did not mention the message he had received from him.

"He's a slippery customer," said Barlock. "I thought all along he was not playing a straight game."

"I know you did," answered the General. "But I don't see anything remarkable in his not being here. He did not definitely say he would be here. You say that you have taken over the Purbiah prisoners and the guards? There was no difficulty about either, I suppose?"

"No, sir," answered Barlock stiffly. "I had taken the necessary steps to prevent the possibility of there being any difficulty."

"Well, then, Jayle must have left instructions with the Kolaris to hand over the prisoners and

himself gone to collect his outlying detachments and tell them what has happened. You will find he will come back here all right before nightfall with the remainder of his regiment. In fact, as far as I remember, that is what he said he was going to do. You must remember that a good many of his men have been fighting Akbar Ali's gang all day."

"I hope so, sir," answered Barlock. As General Matthews had rightly guessed what Jayle had, in fact, written in his note, it was obviously unnecessary to tell him anything about the note Jayle had left.

Jardigne reached Barachina just at dusk. The place was all in confusion, and at first he was lost and might have been in a strange cantonment. In this dazed condition he was found by Major James, the brigade staff officer, who asked him who he was. Jardigne told him and in turn asked him where he could find the General.

"I'm just going over there myself," answered James. "You had better send those men off to Jemadar Nishan Ali. Your Kolaris are still in their own lines. The rest of the brigade is bivouacking on what I suppose was the parade ground."

Jardigne sent the Kolaris off and went with James to the General's office.

"Lieutenant Jardigne, sir, of the 100th Bengal Infantry," said James, as he brought Jardigne into the office. "He has only just come in from Sitoli with the detachment of that regiment." James saluted and left Jardigne with Colonel Barlock.

"Colonel Jayle asked me to give you this letter, sir," said Jardigne.

"Didn't Colonel Jayle come in with you from Sitoli?"

"No, sir."

"You have just come in from Sitoli?"

"Yes, sir."

Colonel Barlock looked surprised, but he opened and read the letter addressed to General Matthews.

"Do you know the contents of this letter, Jardigne?" Colonel Barlock asked, looking closely at Jardigne.

"No, sir. Colonel Jayle rode on to Sitoli, while I and the rest of the men marched from the Sitapani river, where we had driven Akbar Ali and his gang. By the time I reached Sitoli he had finished and sealed his letter."

"Where is Colonel Jayle now?"

"I cannot say, sir. I left him at Sitoli; but I gathered he did not intend to stay there."

"When do you expect he will come to Barachina?"

Jardigne hesitated before replying. "I cannot say, sir," he said at last. "I understood he intended to answer that question in his letter."

"The answer I gather from this letter," said Colonel Barlock, "is that, at the time he wrote it, he had no immediate intention of coming to Barachina. Did all the men come in with you or only a part?"

"Most of them came with me, sir. Only twenty men stayed with Colonel Jayle."

"Did he have much difficulty in persuading those twenty men to stay with him?"

"No, sir. Rather the reverse. The difficulty lay in persuading the Kolaris to come with me."

"But why did you and the Kolaris come into Barachina and leave Colonel Jayle at Sitoli?"

"It was Colonel Jayle's wish, sir."

"But why did not Colonel Jayle come in himself?"

Jardigne felt he was being "pumped." Colonel Jayle had told him that he could trust General Matthews but at the same time General Matthews did not create quite the same impression on him as he appeared to have done on Colonel Jayle.

"If Colonel Jayle has not given his reason for this in that letter, sir, I am afraid that I am not in a position to offer any suggestion as to what his reason was," Jardigne replied.

"No; quite so," answered Colonel Barlock. He saw that he had got all the information he was likely to get voluntarily out of Jardigne, and he did not want him to find out yet the mistake he had made in giving the letter to the wrong person. "Colonel Jayle certainly gives a reason in this letter. But I can't quite understand the logic of it. The reason he gives seems to me to be equally applicable to you as to himself."

"Yes, sir," answered Jardigne, his suspicions dispelled by the others disarming candour. "It had at first been my intention to remain with him. But Colonel Jayle himself wished me to join your brigade with the Kolaris and persuaded me and them to do so."

"Still, I hope to be able to convince him that

JAYLE REVERSES HIS DECISION 261

the reasons he gives in this letter are not very satisfying. Can I do this ? ”

“Colonel Jayle is not an easy men to convince by argument, sir,” said Jardigne with a slight smile.

“That is not exactly what I mean,” answered Colonel Barlock. “I mean, is there any chance of arguing with him ? Could I write a letter that would reach him ? ”

“Oh, yes, sir. I could easily arrange that. I could send a Kolari who could certainly find him. But it might take time. I understood from Colonel Jayle that you were leaving here to-morrow morning.”

So Colonel Jayle knew that, did he, thought Barlock. He was probably relying a good deal on that fact and, when the brigade left Barachina, he intended to return and continue his nefarious existence as an “adventurer.” He practically acknowledged as much in his letter to General Matthews.

“You appear to be greatly attached to Colonel Jayle, Jardigne,” said Colonel Barlock. “Would you run a considerable risk to do him service ? ”

“Yes, sir.”

“Don’t the arguments he used to persuade you and the Kolaris to join this brigade apply with equal force to himself ? ”

“Yes, sir, I suppose they do. Only he is an old man,” Jardigne added ; it was the only argument that he could at the moment remember that Jayle had used that did not apply with equal force to himself.

"Well, so am I," answered Colonel Barlock pleasantly. "But that would be no argument to persuade me to go rushing off into the hills."

"Colonel Jayle loves the hills, sir."

"Colonel Jayle is also one of the two Englishmen in the world who has any real influence with the Kolaris. The other one, I understand, is yourself," added Colonel Barlock with a glance at Jayle's letter so that Jardigne might see his reasons for supposing this. Jardigne blushed.

"I have had the opportunity of experience; that is all, sir."

"Exactly. You mustn't mind my mentioning it, but you are still rather young. That is no crime and you will soon grow out of it. But you can hardly expect me to leave you in command of the Kolaris, can you?"

"No, sir. I didn't."

"Do you think there is a man in the brigade capable of doing this as well as Colonel Jayle?"

"No, sir; there certainly isn't."

"Now, don't you think Colonel Jayle has behaved rather selfishly? That he has considered his own convenience rather than his Kolaris' interest? Whether or not he is an old man, he must know that he is the only man capable of commanding the Kolari wing. He has made things rather difficult for me, suddenly throwing this Kolari wing at my head, when he knows perfectly well that I cannot find anyone capable and at the same time sufficiently senior to command it, hasn't he?"

"Yes, sir; I suppose so," answered Jardigne doubtfully.

"Now you said a moment ago that you were willing to incur a risk to do Colonel Jayle a service. So am I. Put perfectly bluntly, Colonel Jayle has, by failing to join this brigade—or rather by leaving it after once having joined it—committed the crime of desertion while on active service. Now you and I both know that he has not done this deliberately, but that makes no difference to the fact. So we must see that the position is reversed without anyone being aware of what the facts were. I propose to write to Colonel Jayle an answer to this letter. But I cannot send it by a Kolari. You must take it yourself, and I must rely on your being able to persuade Colonel Jayle to come back here with you. That is the only way to do it without it becoming generally known that Colonel Jayle had intended to desert. No one will think it at all out of the way that he should come in to-morrow. It will be thought that he was merely out bringing in his other detachments. Now it's getting late. I believe I have invaded your bungalow. You and Dwyre share a bungalow? Well, Dwyre is there now, and James and myself have established ourselves there too. I'm afraid you won't be able to see Dwyre to-night, but he is doing quite well. Now we had better go over and get something to eat. But don't talk about this in front of James. The fewer people that know about this the better."

The two went off together to Jardigne's bungalow, where they found James and the surgeon.

During dinner Colonel Barlock kept the conversation to Jardigne's action against Akbar Ali between Sitoli and the Sitapani river, and as soon as the meal was over Jardigne said he was tired and would go to bed at once. Colonel Barlock turned to James.

"Cancel the orders for to-morrow's march as far as the 50th are concerned," he said. "The rest of the brigade and all transport and sick and wounded will go down to-morrow as already ordered. There are still some detachments of Kolaris to come in. The 50th will remain here to-morrow and march down the next day."

James went off to issue the necessary orders, and when he had gone Barlock turned to Jardigne "You must be tired, Jardigne," he said; "but before you turn in I want to be quite sure you understand the arrangements for to-morrow. We start at daybreak; you can take two or three Kolaris with you, men who are skilled trackers for preference. I shan't go beyond Sitoli myself; but I will give you a letter for Colonel Jayle, and you must go on and find him and persuade him to come back with you, at any rate to Sitoli, where he will meet me. Even if you cannot persuade him to return to Barachina, I hope I may be able to do so. Is that clear?"

"Yes, sir," answered Jardigne, and he was only too pleased to be able to escape to bed.

As soon as he was certain that Jardigne had turned in Colonel Barlock went to the lines of his own regiment and told Cunningham that the orders for the morrow's march were cancelled, but

that a hundred men were to be ready to march off at eight o'clock in the morning under Lieutenant Barlock. Lieutenant Barlock was to be told on no account to leave Barachina before eight o'clock, but then to march straight to Sitoli.

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Jayle watched Jardigne and his men out of sight as they marched from Sitoli towards Barachina, and then he turned north into the hills. When he had gone about three miles he decided to camp for the night in a deep wooded valley, where there would be no likelihood of his being found, even if the hills were searched, except by anyone who knew the hills thoroughly.

The next morning he woke with the sun and, while the Kolaris were preparing a meal, he discussed future plans with Niaz Mahomed.

"I am glad you hanged Akbar Ali," Jayle said. "But for him we would have been left in peace without the British interfering. But once a British force had found us out there was nothing for it but to do as we did, and join them, or resist them, which would practically mean joining the mutineers. Either way, the independent existence we hoped for was impossible, as once they had found us they would never have left us."

"What do you think will be the outcome?"

"When the mutiny is quelled, I hope the Kolaris will return and that the regiment will be reformed, only that then it will consist entirely of Kolaris, as I at first suggested when the raising of the regiment was first mooted. For some time

after the mutiny has been quelled there will be a good deal of chaos in India, and we shall be left to do more or less as we please. In fact, we will be in the same position as we were till yesterday."

Niaz Mahomed thought for a little while. "But they won't put you in command then," he said.

"Yes, they will," answered Jayle. "I have thought of that. It was a mistake on my part not to go back to Barachina with Jardigne Sahib. In any case, over and above the fact that this British force has found us, active raiding would now be out of the question, now that we have lost practically the whole of the band. So, as soon as I have had a meal, I shall return to Barachina. My absence is bound to attract attention; yours will not. I am the only person in a position to report your desertion, and of course I shall not. You and these men must stay in Kolaristan. Enlist and train up another band, as the regiment is bound to lose men in the campaign against the mutineers. Then, when we return, the band can be at once brought up to its original strength and more. In order to get the regiment composed entirely of Kolaris it would be necessary for me to be able to show that I could raise the necessary number of men."

"If you go back to Barachina, I will go with you."

"Who will then raise the necessary number of men to fill up the band when we return?"

"We can do that when we return."

"We will probably have only about two hundred men then. And when we return we shall find

powerful bands here that have been raised in our absence."

Niaz Mahomed made no reply.

"No," continued Jayle. "Either you or I must remain here in Kolaristan. There is no one else with the necessary name and prestige. If I remain the British will never reinstate me in command. They will hunt me as a rebel, and this brigade will remain in Kolaristan to do so. Therefore you must stay. Nothing can be done until this brigade has left Kolaristan, and it will not do so until I have joined it. But, as soon as it has left, you must set to work at once to create a powerful band to take our place before anyone else has the opportunity to attempt to do so. Fortunately, Akbar Ali and all his band have been safely and satisfactorily dealt with. I would naturally prefer that you should come with me to Barachina, but it is impossible. No one but yourself can raise the new band to such a strength, and so quickly, as to make it impossible for us to find serious rivals when we return. If you stay, then, on our return, the position will be as it was yesterday. If you come with me, the position when we return will be as it was four years ago. You must see which position would be the best for us, and which would be the most likely to lead to further interference from the British."

Niaz Mahomed reluctantly agreed, and they both started on the meal which the Kolaris had by now prepared. But before they had finished Jayle heard the hail Jardigne usually gave to attract his attention. Jayle did not answer it at

once, fearing treachery, but sent a man back along his tracks towards Sitoli to investigate. In about half an hour this man returned with Jardigne and two or three Kolaris.

Jayle was naturally surprised to see him, and asked him "why he had come back." For answer Jardigne gave him the letter Colonel Barlock had entrusted to him, and Jayle, never having seen either General Matthews' or Colonel Barlock's handwriting, read it without suspicion.

"DEAR JAYLE,"

"I have received your letter from Lieutenant Jardigne; but there are three things which I think you overlook, and which I wish to point out to you.

"(1) You are the only person capable of and sufficiently senior to command this Kolari wing, and I think it is unfair to me to throw them at my head in this way without their leader.

"(2) For the same reason, it is unfair to your Kolaris, who would have to be commanded by a man they did not know, and who didn't know them.

"(3) It is unfair to yourself deliberately to brand yourself as a deserter in this way, and it is because I know that you do not realise that this is what your action really amounts to that I take the liberty of sending Jardigne to you with this letter.

"I hope you will listen to what he has to say, and that for my sake, for the sake of your Kolaris, and for your own sake, you will return with him to Barachina. Never mind about the men with

you coming in. I can condone and acquiesce in a certain number of desertions amongst the Kolaris, but not that of their natural leader.

"Yours faithfully,

"R. S. MATTHEWS."

Jayle read this letter, looked up at Jardigne and laughed when he had done so.

"Your arguments are unnecessary," he said, throwing the letter back to Jardigne. "Was it yourself, or General Matthews, who suggested that I was open to argument? However, I have already discussed things with Niaz Mahomed and decided to join this brigade after all. Niaz Mahomed will stay behind in Kolaristan to raise another band, both in order to prevent possible rivals doing the same, and also to replenish the inevitable casualties that will occur amongst the Kolaris in the campaign against the mutineers. Then, when we come back, we shall still find him King of Kolaristan. It seems almost a pity that you went into Barachina yourself, Jardigne. But for that nobody in this brigade would have known of your existence, and you could easily have stayed here and remained Niaz Mahomed's adviser."

Jardigne's eyes sparkled for a moment at the thought, but then he saw that Jayle was only teasing him.

"It would have been preferable from my own point of view if you had suggested it before I had met General Matthews," he said. "General Matthews has a way of arguing that might even convince you that to do so would be desertion."

"Possibly," answered Jayle with a chuckle. "Fortunately for myself, perhaps, his arguments are unnecessary. I am an old man, and my life has set in a groove. If someone were suddenly to get the better of me in an argument, there is no knowing what might happen. However, the main point is that I was coming in to Barachina anyhow, as soon as I had finished this meal, without any extraneous arguments. It was a mistake my not coming in with you from Sitoli in the first place. Now sit down and eat and tell me what you think of General Matthews."

"I didn't like him very much at first," answered Jardigne. "In fact, I couldn't understand your panegyrics. But he improved on acquaintance, and I quite agree with you now."

"Yes, I felt exactly the same. We did not hit it off entirely at first."

"He is at Sitoli now, and is coming back with us to Barachina."

"Why is he doing that ?"

"I don't know. But he seemed particularly to wish to keep what he calls your desertion quiet. I think that he has come out to Sitoli so that your coming back to Barachina with him will raise no questions."

"I see. Have you met Colonel Barlock yet ?"

"No. I was absolutely lost when I first got to Barachina. I had never seen or imagined the place with a brigade there. I was found by the brigade staff officer, who took me straight to the General. He is living in my own bungalow, and I had dinner with them and turned in immediately afterwards. I

was pretty tired, and they and the surgeon were the only three I met. The surgeon said Dwyre was getting along all right, but it was too late for me to see him myself."

"Well, I expect you'll meet Colonel Barlock soon enough. He is the sort of aggressive person one can't help meeting," said Jayle, who was now ready to go with Jardigne to Sitoli.

As the two came to Sitoli they suddenly noticed that the place was held by about a hundred Sikhs, and they found themselves surrounded before they had realised it. A young officer approached and addressed himself to Jayle.

"My father says you are to accompany me to Barachina," he said.

"Oh, indeed?" Jayle replied. "And what does mother say? Do you know this young person, Jardigne?"

"No," answered Jardigne. "But there is General Matthews," he added. "He can introduce us if necessary."

Jayle looked up and saw Colonel Barlock walking towards them. "That is not General Matthews," he only had time to say before Colonel Barlock joined them. "That is Colonel Barlock. Whatever you do, keep your temper and don't do anything rash." But the smirk on young Barlock's face as Jayle said this nearly caused Jardigne to forget the warning almost before it was uttered.

"Colonel Jayle," said Colonel Barlock, "you will please consider yourself under arrest. I regret I have noticed your reluctance to accompany the officer I had detailed to inform you of the fact."

"If this is the officer you are referring to," answered Jayle, "he failed to give me your message."

"I told Colonel Jayle, sir," said Barlock, "that you wished him to accompany me to Barachina."

Jayle looked at him and laughed quietly. Jardigne was on the point of giving Barlock the lie when Jayle silenced him with a look and a smile.

"It would do me no manner of good if you were to give these gentlemen the opportunity they would like of placing you under arrest too, Jardigne," he said. "That is your pony, isn't it? Thank you for your company so far, but I am sure Colonel Barlock and, I presume, his son will excuse you."

"Lieutenant Jardigne will accompany us back to Barachina," said Colonel Barlock.

"May I ask if Lieutenant Jardigne is under arrest also?" said Jayle.

"If Jardigne wants that question answered, he can ask it himself."

"May I ask, sir, if I am under arrest?" Jardigne asked as quietly as he could.

"No. If necessary, you will be informed when you are under arrest."

"Are my movements restricted, sir?"

"Your movements are restricted, as every soldier's are, by the fact that you are required to obey orders. You will accompany me to Barachina."

"Very good, sir," answered Jardigne, saluting.

"May I ask what the charge is under which I am placed under arrest?" Jayle asked.

"Desertion, waging war against Her Majesty the Queen, and seducing sepoys from their allegiance," answered Colonel Barlock.

Jayle raised his eyebrows slightly, but made no reply.

"Search this officer," continued Colonel Barlock, speaking to his son.

Jayle handed his sword to Colonel Barlock. "That is unnecessary," he said.

The Kolaris who had accompanied Jayle had been watching the proceedings in some perplexity. They thought that the Sahib-log were quarrelling about something, but they could not be sure. Sahib-log had such curious, quiet ways of quarrelling. But when they saw Jayle hand over his sword, they knew something was wrong and rushed to his assistance. Jardigne, however, intercepted them and, in the scuffle, managed to give the letter which Colonel Barlock had written and signed "Matthews" to one of them unobserved.

"You can do no good," said Jardigne in the Kolari dialect. "Give this letter to Niaz Mahomed. I will send for it again later."

The Kolaris at once desisted from their useless attempt to help Jayle, and Jardigne saw to his satisfaction that they managed to slip away to the hills unobserved by the rest, who were intent on watching Jayle.

"I consider it necessary," said Colonel Barlock after this interruption, and he repeated his order to his son. Jayle submitted to the search. He had not realised, as Jardigne had done, the object the Barlocks were searching for.

"No, sir," said Barlock, when he had thoroughly searched Jayle. "I can't find it."

Then Jayle realised what Colonel Barlock had hoped to find, and he smiled.

"Where is the letter Lieutenant Jardigne gave you?" asked Colonel Barlock, flushed with vexation and disappointment.

"Lieutenant Jardigne certainly gave me a letter this morning. But I do not understand how that letter concerns you. Even if it did concern you in any way, I do not consider myself bound to hand it over to you, or even to discuss it with you."

Colonel Barlock hid his annoyance with an effort; but he particularly wanted that letter destroyed now that it had served its purpose. He turned to Jardigne. "Did you give Colonel Jayle the letter I gave you this morning?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," answered Jardigne.

"What did he do with it?"

"He read it, sir."

"Of course he did, you little fool," said Colonel Barlock, almost beside himself with passion. "You know perfectly well that is not what I want to know. I won't stand impertinence or prevarication from you. Answer my question. What did Colonel Jayle do with the letter when he had read it?"

"I did not notice particularly, sir," answered Jardigne quietly. "As far as I remember, he threw it on the ground. I remember him saying, when he had read the letter, that it was unnecessary, as he had already decided to come straight in to Barachina that morning anyhow."

"I don't believe you," said Colonel Barlock angrily.

Jardigne flushed but, catching Jayle's eye, said nothing.

"Will you give me your word of honour that you have not got this letter in your possession, Colonel Jayle?" said Colonel Barlock.

"I'm afraid I cannot do that unless you can give me some description of the letter," answered Jayle. "Perhaps you wrote the letter yourself?"

"The letter was entrusted to me to pass on to you," answered Colonel Barlock. "The signature was that of General Matthews."

"Ah!" Jayle said. "Then all you really require is an acknowledgment from me that I received the latter. I did."

"I require an acknowledgment from you that the letter is not now in your possession, and that you do not know where it is."

"I think we must be talking at cross-purposes, and each referring to a different letter," answered Jayle. "I'm afraid I can give you no information regarding the letter you refer to. I can only suggest your applying to General Matthews. He can doubtless tell you all you want to know. For instance, whether he ever wrote the letter to me at all."

"That, of course, I can inquire from General Matthews if and when I choose. What I inquired of you is—where the letter is now? That General Matthews will naturally be unable to tell me. Will you give me your word of honour that you threw the letter on the ground when you had read it;

and that, beyond this, you do not know where it is now ?”

“The question of honour cannot arise between us, Colonel Barlock ; certainly not with regard to this letter.”

“If that is intended to refer to your position as a deserter from Her Majesty’s service and a rebel, I must acquiesce in your statement that it is impossible for you to give me your word of honour and agree with you. But I am bound to acknowledge that your point of view causes me some surprise.”

“It does not refer to any suspicions that may be in your mind, and which will have to be proved. It means that, in my opinion, you are not in a position to discuss a matter of honour with me. That opinion is based on the suspicion in my mind, which will also have to be proved, that you are a forger.”

Barlock was furious, but he at least knew that Jayle had not got the letter in his possession now. He turned to Jardigne. “Will you give me your word of honour,” he said, “that you have not got the letter I ordered you to give to Colonel Jayle in your possession now, and that you do not know where it is ?”

“I give you my word of honour, sir,” answered Jardigne, “that the letter is not in my possession. It is either irretrievably lost, or else some Kolari has got it. But he, in any case, could not read it.”

“Thank you,” answered Colonel Barlock. “It is really of no importance, and enough time has been already wasted. We will proceed to Barachina.”

CHAPTER XVIII

A FOOL IN HIS FOLLY

WHEN the party reached Barachina, they proceeded at once to Jayle's bungalow. On arrival Jayle demanded to see the Brigade Commander.

"For the present I am Brigade Commander," answered Barlock.

"Where is General Matthews?"

"General Matthews unfortunately had an accident, and has sprained his ankle and is in hospital. The rest of the brigade marched down to the plains this morning; there is at present only my own regiment and the brigade staff here, and we march down to-morrow. It is possible that you may be able to see General Matthews to-morrow, if you wish to; but I doubt it. All the sick and wounded are leaving to-morrow back for the Punjab. You and your Kolaris certainly put up a stout resistance, and we suffered a certain number of casualties before we finally overcame you."

Jayle shrugged his shoulders and looked at Jardigne, but made no reply. Jardigne asked Colonel Barlock if he had any further orders for him.

"No, thank you, Jardigne," said Colonel Barlock. "James and I have moved out of your

bungalow and come over here ; but I am afraid you will still find that your bungalow has been invaded by strangers. These two are the only habitable bungalows in the place, and so I am afraid it was inevitable. Barlock and two other officers of my regiment have established themselves there. He will go over with you and introduce you to the others. Your own Kolaris have already gone down, so you can go down independently. We march at six o'clock to-morrow morning."

Jardigne saluted and mounted his pony, and the two subalterns left the two Colonels scowling at one another as James and Cunningham came up.

"Our respective C.O.'s seem rather annoyed with one another, don't they ?" Barlock said with a grin.

Jardigne made no reply. The other looked up at him as he was riding beside him and saw that Jardigne was looking straight in front of him with an angry flush on his face.

"The fact that our C.O.'s quarrel isn't any reason why we should do the same, surely," said Barlock. "Their quarrel is no concern of ours."

Jardigne kicked his pony viciously in the ribs. She was a country-bred mare, and she gave a little squeal, lashed out with her hind legs and bolted off, covering Barlock with dust and gravel. Jardigne rode straight to the stables, dismounted and soothed the mare, waiting for her sais to come over. It was seldom he allowed his temper to vent itself on her, but he had been an unwitting party to Colonel Jayle's deception, and everything seemed to be going as wrong as it could. He handed the

mare over to the sais with a parting pat on her neck and walked over to his bungalow, on the veranda of which he met Barlock and two other officers, evidently discussing him. Jardigne was passing them without a word when Barlock called after him.

"Jardigne," he said, "what's the matter? I don't want to quarrel with you. I'm sorry if I said anything about Colonel Jayle that you did not like. This is Smythe and Johnstone."

Jardigne turned and shook hands with the other two to whom he was thus introduced.

"I have certainly no wish to quarrel with you or anyone else," he said. "but I can't discuss Colonel Jayle with you."

"Certainly," answered Barlock. "I only said that a quarrel between Colonel Jayle and my father need not mean a quarrel between us, and it needn't."

"So there's no more to be said," said Johnstone. Then, turning to Jardigne, he added: "Barlock was probably trying to make polite conversation."

Jardigne smiled and turned to go to his room, and Johnstone followed him. "Jardigne," he said, when he was out of earshot of the others, "I hope you won't take Barlock as a *namuna** of the regiment. I don't know, and I don't care, what the quarrel is between Colonel Jayle and Colonel Barlock, and I won't discuss it, as you don't want to. But I'd like you to know that I dislike Colonel Barlock, but I absolutely detest his son. So does Smythe, I know. So if I can do

* Specimen, sample.

anything to help you, let me know. I would do it simply out of hatred for the Barlocks, father and son, if for no other reason."

"Thanks, Johnstone," said Jardigne. "If you don't mind, I should like to be left alone now to think for a bit."

"Right!" said Johnstone. "Barlock goes over to Pa for meals, so there will be only the three of us for tiffin. We'll see that Barlock doesn't worry you." And, with a friendly nod, he turned and went out on to the veranda and joined the others.

Jardigne went into his room and sat on his bed and thought. The first essential was to do nothing that might lead to his own arrest. That Colonel Barlock's aim was to put him under arrest at the slightest excuse was obvious; and, once under arrest, he could be of no assistance to Colonel Jayle.

After sitting in thought for some time, he suddenly remembered that he had heard Colonel Barlock tell Jayle that General Matthews had gone down to the plains that morning with the rest of the sick and wounded and would leave the next morning for the Punjab. Colonel Barlock had told him he could go down independently. So Jardigne decided to go down to the brigade camp on the plains that afternoon, without a word to anybody, and by some means or other see General Matthews and tell him everything that had happened.

If there was trouble afterwards, he could say that he had received permission to go down independently, and had come down to see Dwyre, who would also, presumably, be going up to the

Punjab with the sick and wounded the next morning, and whom he would not see if he waited to come down with Colonel Barlock's regiment. Besides, once he had seen General Matthews and told him the position, it didn't matter much what happened to himself.

During tiffin the other two tried to keep Jardigne's mind away from Jayle's misfortune by getting him to relate his experiences since the mutiny at Barachina; and, what with this and his decision to go and find General Matthews, which however he did not tell the others, he rose from tiffin in a frame of mind a good deal more cheerful than when he sat down. After tiffin they all went to their rooms for the afternoon siesta, but Jardigne sat on his bed and waited until Barlock returned from the other bungalow, and then saddled his mare and rode off to Utra and thence down the path to the pass, thus avoiding all risk of attracting attention as he left Barachina.

He knew he was perfectly safe as long as he remained in the hills, and when he reached the plains he hoped to find the brigade close to the mouth of the pass, and in case of trouble he trusted to the speed of his mare.

When he reached Utra he found Ahmed Ali, who had been left in charge of the fort there, and told him at all costs to get hold of the letter that he had sent back to Niaz Mahomed from Sitoli after he and Jayle Sahib had left him to return to Barachina that morning. When he had got hold of it, to send it down at once to Nishan Ali, who was in camp with the brigade at the deserted

village. If questioned, the man who brought the letter to Nishan Ali was to say that he had heard about what had happened while he was on leave, and that he had come to rejoin, as the regiment was moving from Barachina to fight the Purbiahs. Then he rode on down the path to the Barachina pass, and so down towards the plains.

From the mouth of the pass he saw the brigade camp at the deserted village which Akbar Ali had sacked just after the mutiny at Barachina, and he reached the village between four and five o'clock in the afternoon, and went straight to the hospital and inquired for Dwyre.

He found Dwyre, quite cheerful, in a small tent by himself, and was sitting down chatting to him when the surgeon came in.

"I thought you were still up at Barachina and were not coming down until to-morrow morning," said the surgeon when Dwyre introduced the two. "I didn't know the 50th had come in this afternoon. I must go off and tell the General. He is in a rabid state of mind over it all."

"The 50th aren't in," answered Jardigne, stopping him at the door of the tent. "They are not coming in till to-morrow. I came on by myself as I heard all the sick and wounded were going back to the Punjab to-morrow, and I was afraid Dwyre would have left by the time we reached here, and I should miss him if I waited and came in with the 50th. So I rode in this afternoon. I hope the General's ankle is getting on all right. What is he mad about?"

"What's he mad about? The whole thing.

More especially Colonel Barlock staying behind at Barachina, when he thought the whole brigade was down here ; and keeping James up there too."

"Oh, I see. I suppose he wants to give Colonel Barlock instructions before he goes to the Punjab ?"

"Is Colonel Barlock going back to the Punjab ? How do you know ?"

"No. But I thought the General was."

"The General ? Not a bit of it. He won't go back to the Punjab. He'll be able to ride in a day or two. He won't think of it."

That put an entirely different aspect on things. If General Matthews himself was not going back to the Punjab, and moreover was likely to resume command of his brigade in a day or two, Colonel Jayle would certainly see him himself, and there was no necessity for Jardigne to run the risk of further mistakes in an interview between himself and the General. So he sat talking a while with Dwyre and then, just after five o'clock, he started back for Barachina, which he reached at about sunset.

As he came on to the veranda of his bungalow, after taking his mare to the stable, he met Major James.

"Hullo, Jardigne !" said James. "The very man I want. Where have you been all the evening ? Colonel Barlock sent over here for you, and you were nowhere to be found."

"I've been for a bit of a ride, sir," answered Jardigne.

"Well, you had better come over and soothe

Colonel Barlock now. He's in a state of absolute panic. I believe he expects you to bring a swarm of your Kolaris about his ears any minute. Anyhow, come along ! ”

They went over to the other bungalow.

“ Where have you been all the afternoon, Jardigne ? ” Colonel Barlock asked, when the two came on to the veranda of Jayle's bungalow. “ I sent for you at three o'clock. ”

“ I've been for a ride, sir, ” answered Jardigne.

The Colonel looked fierce, and glared at the young officer.

“ Ride ? ” he repeated, in a tone of anger. “ I should have thought that you and your pony had had enough exercise during the past week or so. Do you usually take your riding exercise before three o'clock in the afternoon in the hot weather ? ”

“ No, sir. It was not merely for exercise that I rode out. ”

“ Why, then, ” Colonel Barlock asked, looking at the other suspiciously. “ Where did you go ? ”

“ I rode down to the brigade camp on the plains at the deserted village, sir. ”

The Colonel looked fiercer than ever.

“ The brigade camp ? What for ? ”

“ I went there to see Captain Dwyre, sir. I overheard you tell Colonel Jayle that all the sick and wounded were going back to the Punjab to-morrow morning. I was afraid if I didn't go down this afternoon they would have left by the time we got down there to-morrow. I hadn't seen Dwyre since he was wounded, and I naturally did not want to miss him. ”

"Naturally," said Colonel Barlock, now mollified. "I should have thought of that. But you ought to have let someone know where you were going."

"I'm sorry, sir. I thought everybody would be asleep, and that it was not worth while waking anybody up to tell them that I was going out."

"Well, there is no harm done. How is Captain Dwyre?"

"He is absolutely cheery, sir. His wound is a bit painful, but it is doing well. The surgeon says there will probably be no ill effects afterwards at all."

"Good! I'm glad to hear that. And did you see any of the other wounded?"

"No, sir. I just saw Dwyre and talked to him and the surgeon for a bit. Then I rode back here. It was getting a bit late."

"You didn't see General Matthews?"

"No, sir. I asked the surgeon how he was getting on, of course; the surgeon said he was doing quite well too."

"Good!" said Colonel Barlock, turning towards the door into the bungalow.

Jardigne saluted, and went back to his bungalow. He decided not to tell anyone that General Matthews did not propose to go back to the Punjab at all, but intended to resume command of his brigade almost at once. As long as Colonel Barlock had no reason to believe that his tenure of office was to be of such short duration, he would do nothing in respect of Colonel Jayle's case until he had got out of Kolaristan. But if he should suspect that

his power for mischief was to be so shortlived, he might do Jayle some harm before General Matthews could interfere.

When he got back to his bungalow he merely told the others that he had ridden down to the brigade camp to see Dwyre, who would presumably be leaving for the Punjab the next morning—a procedure that seemed perfectly natural to him, and he did not know why it should create such a panic. But Smythe and Johnstone could not fail to notice that he was in a much more cheerful frame of mind than he had been when he had first returned to his bungalow from Sitoli. That his ride was responsible for this change was obvious, but they forebore to question him.

The next morning, when the 50th started their march down to the plains from Barachina, Jardigne asked for and obtained permission to ride on ahead.

“I am rather afraid that you may find the sick convoy has started by the time you get there,” said Colonel Barlock, as he gave him this permission. “If it has, I wouldn’t ride after it, if I were you. The plains are even more dangerous for you to ride about alone on than these hills would be for me. Also,” he went on, “a wounded man on the move does not want conversation. And, as a third consideration, I shall want you when I get to camp myself. You will, of course, command the Kolari wing, which will be attached to the 50th, for the present at least.”

Jardigne saluted, and cantered off with Cunningham, whom Colonel Barlock sent forward both

to fix up the arrangements for camp and also to see Major Vaughan, who had been left behind under arrest when the regiment marched up to Barachina. Jardigne, in Colonel Barlock's opinion, would act as a safeguard to Cunningham while in the pass against a Kolari attack, and Cunningham's presence would prevent Jardigne carrying out any idea he might still have in his mind of deserting, joining Niaz Mahomed in the hills, and attempting to rescue Jayle. He had seen quite enough of the Kolaris' fighting powers in the pass against a full brigade without wishing to have to force his way down with his own isolated regiment.

Cunningham and Jardigne separated when they reached the brigade camp, Cunningham going to Vaughan's tent, and Jardigne to the Kolari lines. Here he sought out Nishan Ali, and taking him aside told him how he had mistaken Colonel Barlock for General Matthews and brought Colonel Jayle to Sitoli, when he had in any case changed his mind and intended to return to Barachina, and how Colonel Jayle had been arrested as a rebel and a deserter.

"Colonel Barlock is Jayle Sahib's enemy," Jardigne said in conclusion; "but he thinks that General Matthews Sahib has gone back with the sick convoy to the Punjab. But General Matthews Sahib is still here, and will keep command of the brigade, and the General Sahib is Jayle Sahib's friend. So there is nothing to be done for the present; in fact, any action we may take now would probably be prejudicial to Jayle Sahib's interests

"When Colonel Barlock comes in, as he will in two or three hours time," he continued, "he will find himself powerless. So explain what has happened to the other Kolaris, and see that none of them do anything rash when they see that Jayle Sahib is a prisoner. If they do, it will spoil everything, as General Matthews Sahib will think that Jayle Sahib himself had tried to arrange for his rescue. There is one other thing I must tell you," he went on, lowering his voice: "The letter which Colonel Barlock wrote, and by means of which he persuaded Jayle Sahib to come to Sitoli, is with Niaz Mahomed. On my way here this morning I told Ahmed Ali at Utra to get hold of this letter and send it down to you here. The man who brings it will say that he had heard about what had happened while he was on leave, and that he had come to rejoin, as the regiment was moving from Barachina to fight the Purbiahs. As soon as you get the letter let me have it quietly. But don't give it to me if any other sahib at all is present. I will come down to the lines again in about half an hour."

Jardigne left it to Nishan Ali to explain the position to the other Kolaris and loitered about the camp for about half an hour. Then he went back to the Kolari lines, where he remained chatting with the men till the 50th arrived in camp.

Cunningham, when he left Jardigne, rode straight to Vaughan's tent and rapped on the tent fly with his riding whip. He entered the tent and told Vaughan that the regiment was coming in, but that Colonel Barlock had sent him forward to see

Vaughan and ask him if he wished to see Colonel Barlock on his arrival, or to make any report.

"No," answered Vaughan; "but as you are here I should like your assurance that the letter I wrote was sent to the Brigadier; also whether any answer has been received yet, or any orders given about me."

"Colonel Barlock is himself Brigadier now," and Vaughan looked surprised.

"One moment, while I look up my copy of the letter," said he. "I thought so," he added, when he found the copy of the letter. "In my letter I wrote, 'I would also request that this letter be attached to the letter No. 69 referred to.' Has that been done?"

"As far as I am aware, it has not."

"Do you mind if I write asking you officially? Then you can ascertain and let me know definitely whether it has or has not been done."

"Certainly."

Vaughan sat down and wrote:

"SIR,

"I have the honour to request that you will inform me whether my letter dated 8th June, in answer to the accusations made in letter No. 69 of the same date, has been forwarded to higher authority and attached to the letter No. 69 referred to, as requested in my letter.

"I have the honour to be, Sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"R. C. VAUGHAN, *Major*.

"Attached 50th P.I."

Vaughan read this letter over to Cunningham, and then sealed and gave it to him.

Cunningham rode off presently to make arrangements for the camping of the regiment on its arrival. He then rode back to meet the regiment, finding it halted just clear of the pass. He handed Vaughan's letter to Colonel Barlock, who read it.

"File it and answer it to-morrow," said he contemptuously, handing the missive back to Cunningham. "By that time his wretched rigmarole will have been forwarded to higher authority—namely, myself as Brigadier—and attached to the letter. I'll see about it as soon as you can get the office open, James," he added, addressing the brigade staff officer.

When the regiment reached camp Colonel Barlock sent James off to the brigade staff office, and said that he and Cunningham were going over to the regimental office to find Vaughan's letter, and that he himself would come over to the brigade office in about an hour.

Scarcely had Colonel Barlock and Cunningham commenced to unpack the regimental office, to search for Vaughan's original letter, when Major James came up and saluted.

"General Matthews' compliments, sir," he said, "and he would like to see you at the brigade office."

Colonel Barlock's jaw dropped, but he recovered himself in a moment and went off without a word. James followed him as far as the brigade office, but he did not enter with him.

"How is it that my orders for the brigade to

leave Barachina yesterday were not carried out by your regiment, Colonel Barlock?" asked the General, when Colonel Barlock entered the office.

"You were on the sick list, sir," answered Barlock. "The command of the brigade devolved on me. In fact, I understood that those were your orders to the brigade staff officer. Circumstances arose which necessitated one regiment remaining up at Barachina for one day. I was on the point of writing a report of those circumstances for your information when I received your message that you wished to see me. I can, if you prefer it, make my report verbally."

"I should prefer it."

"The day before yesterday, after the detachment of the Kolari wing returned from Sitoli in the evening, I found that the person who calls himself Colonel Jayle had not returned with them. I say the person who calls himself Colonel Jayle, because I also found out that he is not a military officer at all, but a mere adventurer. He was appointed, certainly, to command this Kolari regiment when it was raised, as he was the only European who knew anything about the Kolaris. But up to that time he was a mere adventurer and worse. He was the actual leader of a band of Kolari dacoits. But this former existence is beside the point for the moment. I merely mention it to account for my calling him the person who calls himself Colonel Jayle.

"As I said before," he continued, "I found that this person, instead of joining the brigade with the detachment of his unit which came back from

Sitoli, the recall of which was the ostensible reason for his leaving Barachina in the first place, had taken to the hills, obviously with the intention of returning to his former existence as an adventurer and a dacoit. Over and above the fact that this was desertion on his part, it was obviously unwise to leave this nucleus of a serious menace on the flank of our line of communication with the Punjab.

"I, therefore, went out myself, with two companies of my regiment, followed him into the hills, and there arrested him as a deserter. This I did yesterday afternoon, and marched down here this morning. Colonel Jayle is now under arrest in this camp. I will send in a written report with a view to his trial by court-martial."

General Matthews considered this piece of information carefully. He knew perfectly well that Barlock hated Jayle, and that he was an extremely vindictive man. A written report from him would be no more impartial or likely to enable him to see the case in its true perspective than his verbal report. If he called for a written report, he could also, it is true, give Jayle the opportunity of writing his defence. But that would not be of much avail to Jayle, as it could be used as evidence against him, and Jayle would, even if absolutely innocent, probably not avail himself of the opportunity.

"No," said General Matthews, after some consideration. "I will issue orders for Colonel Jayle's trial by court-martial. You will hand over Colonel Jayle to the brigade staff officer, who will arrange

for his detention under arrest. The court-martial will be held as soon as possible after the brigade reaches Meerut."

General Matthews called Major James and told him this, and James and Barlock went over to the 50th lines, where Jayle was handed over to him. Then Colonel Barlock went back to his regimental office, not in the best of tempers.

"Give me that letter of Vaughan's," he said to Cunningham; "no, not that one, the long rigmarole he wrote first."

This letter he took to Vaughan's tent. He rapped on the tent, and entered without waiting for Vaughan to answer. Vaughan stood up as Barlock entered, and each faced the other standing.

"I could not see you about this letter before, Major Vaughan, as of course I had to go on this trip to Barachina," Colonel Barlock said, after waiting to see if the other intended to offer him a chair or be seated himself. It was not his intention to appear to have a quarrel with Vaughan; rather the reverse. But thus standing facing each other it was difficult to carry on the conversation in the way he wished. But Vaughan did neither.

"I do not understand what necessity there was to see me about it, sir," answered Vaughan, as the other paused, obviously expecting a reply.

"The letter is obviously written in a hurry."

"You are mistaken, sir. It was written after most careful consideration. At the same time, I would like to point out that it is obvious that it has not been forwarded in a hurry."

"I did not forward it, as I thought you would

probably wish, on more mature consideration, to withdraw the letter. Once I had forwarded it, it could not be withdrawn."

"I do not wish to withdraw the letter, sir. As I have already told you, the letter was written after most careful consideration."

"In your own interests I strongly advise you to withdraw the letter," he insisted. "This letter can do you no possible good, and it is certain to do you a lot of harm."

"I prefer to be myself the best judge of my own interests, sir. I wish the letter forwarded to General Matthews."

"Have you a copy of the letter yourself?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you read it through carefully again since you sent it in?"

"No, sir. That was not necessary."

"Well, there are one or two points to which I would like to draw your attention," said Barlock, opening the letter and glancing through it. "In the first place, you say: 'As the Commandant states that he had not received my report of the affair in which camels were lost this afternoon, I am at a loss to understand on what information he has based his opinion.' What exactly do you mean by that?"

"The English seems perfectly clear, sir. I do not wish to alter it. If it is unintelligible to you, I can only hope it will be intelligible to General Matthews."

"It is intelligible enough. If you want to know whether I obtained the information from my son,

I can answer that question without referring to General Matthews. I did."

"Is there any other point in the letter you wish to discuss with me, sir?" changing the subject.

"Yes. All this rigmarole about things the Kolaris might do and things you might do. Do you suppose that General Matthews requires lessons in elementary tactics from you?"

"No, sir."

"Well then, why cover pages and pages with stuff that it will only bore General Matthews to wade through?"

"In order that General Matthews may see that, whether my decision to do nothing was right or wrong, at least I had reasons for what I did."

"Again, you say: 'It is obvious that there was no object in making this reconnaissance then, with fifty men, when I could do it later with eighty.' That is perfectly true. So true that it gives away your case entirely. You acknowledge that you could have done the reconnaissance later, and yet you did not do it."

"The reason for that I have given later."

"The reason! A mere paltry excuse."

"It is the only reason I had."

"That makes it all the worse. It gives you away hopelessly at once. If there were the least sense in your reason, why didn't you make the reconnaissance with eighty men, and send Lieutenant Barlock back to camp with the camels?"

"Would you have approved of my decision if I had done so, sir?"

"Certainly not. The only decision I would have

approved of would have been to make the reconnaissance you were ordered to do."

"To the best of my recollection, sir, your instructions to me were to make a reconnaissance up to the pass, and further if I saw the opportunity, but not to get seriously engaged."

"To the best of *my* recollection, my *orders* to you were to make a reconnaissance up the pass. In fact, I'm sure of it. That was the main reason why the regiment was sent ahead of the brigade."

"Of course, I was not aware of that, sir. If I had been, I would have sent the camels back and waited where I was, and joined the rest of the regiment when it came out to make this reconnaissance."

"Even if my instructions were what you say they were, you know perfectly well that 'not getting seriously engaged' means, if you get in contact with the enemy, then break off the action before you get seriously involved. It certainly does not mean to do absolutely nothing if there is the least possibility of your meeting half a dozen enemy. If that were the line taken by the officers of the British Army, we would not, as a nation, be in the position we are now."

"It was not the fear of getting engaged, or even seriously engaged, that deterred me from making the reconnaissance. I have given my reasons in that letter."

"We are talking in a circle. I have given you my opinion of your reasons."

"Yes, sir. You are, of course, at liberty to give General Matthews your opinion of my reasons."

But that does not make me wish to withdraw the letter."

"I have tried to show you that it would be in your own interests to withdraw the letter. The sentence 'I could do it with eighty later,' referring to the reconnaissance, alone gives you away hopelessly."

"I do not wish to withdraw the letter, sir."

"There is one other point then: I would not have mentioned it if you had expressed a wish to withdraw the letter. You say here—'I found, after carefully considering the cause of the loss of the camels, that I could not trust my immediate junior.' Do you refer to Lieutenant Barlock?"

"Yes, sir."

"What are your reasons for distrusting Lieutenant Barlock?"

"You will find, if you will read my letter, sir, that I wish to keep the reasons for my distrust of Lieutenant Barlock to myself. I still wish to do so."

"You imply that the loss of the camels was in some way due to him?"

"It was, sir."

"That amounts to an accusation against Lieutenant Barlock. I insist on that accusation being either substantiated or withdrawn."

"I have informed Lieutenant Barlock of these reasons. As he has been able to give you so much other information about the loss of these camels, he will be able to tell you this also, if he wishes to. It is a matter of indifference to me whether he tells you the truth or not."

"If you cannot substantiate this accusation, I shall be forced to the conclusion that the accusation is false, and that you know it to be false."

"I am afraid I cannot say anything at present to lead you to alter your conclusion, sir."

"You are accused of sufficient and serious crimes already, Vaughan. I cannot understand why you should deliberately lay yourself open to a charge of making a false accusation."

"It is not necessary that you should understand this, sir. Any more than it is necessary that I should understand why, if you are so convinced of my inefficiency and cowardice, you should be at such pains to persuade me in my own interests to withdraw this letter; more especially after you have gone out of your way to make the, to me, perfectly unintelligible accusation of on no less than five occasions failing to carry out orders, resulting on more than one occasion in considerable loss of Government animals. I have asked for details of this accusation, and still await them."

"I see it is quite useless expecting you to listen to reason. For the last time, will you or will you not withdraw this letter?"

"I will not, sir."

Colonel Barlock walked out of the tent and back to the regimental office. He threw Vaughan's letter in front of Cunningham, and told him to file it.

"What answer shall I send to this, sir?" Cunningham asked, showing him Vaughan's second letter.

"Say: 'I am directed by the Commandant to inform you that he has decided not to forward your letter until the case has been decided and finally disposed of by the Brigadier.'"

Cunningham did so.

CHAPTER XIX

DESERTION

ON June 16th the Court assembled at Meerut to try Colonel Jayle on the double charge of waging war against the Queen and desertion.

Major James, the brigade staff officer, was prosecutor, and he called his first witness, Colonel Barlock.

"After the fight between my own regiment and the Kolaris on June 8th," stated Colonel Barlock in his evidence, "I heard Colonel Jayle acknowledge to General Matthews that he was Commandant of the loyal remnants of the 100th Bengal Infantry, that is, the Kolaris with whom my regiment had been engaged. He also stated to General Matthews, in my presence, that he would collect the remainder of his men and join General Matthews' brigade at Barachina.

"Shortly after I heard him make this promise," he proceeded, "General Matthews sprained his ankle, and the command of the brigade devolved on me. Colonel Jayle did not keep that promise. On arrival at Barachina I found that Colonel Jayle had been to that place, but had left again, ostensibly to bring in a detachment of his regiment from Sitoli. That detachment came in to Barachina that evening, but Colonel Jayle did not accompany

it. Up to the morning of June 10th Colonel Jayle had not returned to Barachina.

"I produce a letter which came into my possession on the evening of June 9th," Colonel Barlock continued, producing the letter he had received from Jardigne, addressed to General Matthews. "Two facts will be seen from this letter. First, that prior to the year 1855, Colonel Jayle had been a mere leader of a band of Kolari dacoits, engaged in waging war against Her Majesty and raiding peaceful British subjects in the plains. The second fact that is proved by the contents of this letter is, that Colonel Jayle had no intention of rejoining his regiment.

"On this letter coming into my possession, I considered it my duty to arrest Colonel Jayle as a deserter. I accordingly took two companies of my regiment into the hills to do this. While these companies were resting at Sitoli, Colonel Jayle, accompanied by Lieutenant Jardigne, walked straight into my men, and was surrounded before he realised it. I sent Lieutenant Barlock to Colonel Jayle to inform him that he was under arrest. I noticed that Colonel Jayle appeared to resist his arrest, so I went up to him myself and informed him that he was under arrest."

Colonel Jayle rose to cross-examine Colonel Barlock.

"You state in your evidence that you heard me promise General Matthews that I would join his brigade at Barachina that day. When you reached Barachina, did you receive a written message from me, giving my reason for not being at Barachina?"

"Yes. To the best of my recollection, it was written at the bottom of a message for you from Lieutenant Jardigne. It stated that you had gone to bring Lieutenant Jardigne and his men back to Barachina. Lieutenant Jardigne and his men returned to Barachina without you."

"How did the letter you have produced come into your possession?"

"It was given to me by Lieutenant Jardigne."

"Was the letter open, or was it in a sealed envelope?"

"It was in a sealed envelope."

"Was the envelope addressed to you?"

"No."

"To whom was it addressed?"

"To General Matthews."

"Why did you open it?"

"Because Lieutenant Jardigne informed me that it contained the reason why you did not accompany the detachment from Sitoli to Barachina. As that was an official matter, and I was for the time officiating for General Matthews as Brigadier, I opened and read the letter."

"What grounds have you for supposing I was the leader of a band of dacoits?"

"The statement in your letter, 'between these dates I lived the life of an adventurer.'"

"Does not my statement, later on in the same letter, 'by remaining as I was in Kolaristan, keeping a turbulent country on the flanks of the British Army quiet,' refute that supposition?"

"In my opinion, it does not."

"In your opinion, is an adventurer necessarily the leader of a band of dacoits ? "

"In my opinion, he is—in Kolaristan."

"You have stated that while these companies were resting at Sitoli I walked straight into your men. Did you expect me to come to Sitoli ? "

"I certainly hoped that you would."

"Can you state the exact words you used to Lieutenant Barlock when you sent him to tell me that I was under arrest ? "

"I cannot swear to the exact words, but to the best of my recollection, they were, 'That is Colonel Jayle. Inform him with my compliments that he is under arrest as a deserter, and is to accompany you and your men back to Barachina.' "

"When you informed me that I was under arrest, did I say that Lieutenant Barlock had not given me your message ? "

"You did. You appeared to misunderstand the message."

"Why then do you say in your evidence that I appeared to resist arrest ? "

"It appeared to me at the time that you were resisting arrest. I was not then aware that you had misunderstood my message."

"Did I resist arrest ? "

"No."

Colonel Barlock then left the Court, and the second witness for the prosecution, Lieutenant Barlock, was sworn and gave his evidence. His evidence merely had reference to Colonel Jayle's arrest at Sitoli, and had no direct bearing on the accusations against him on the charge sheet.

This closed the case for the prosecution. Jayle called his first witness for the defence—General Matthews.

“When I left you just before the accident at the Ag, did I make you a definite promise to be at Barachina when you arrived?”

General Matthews considered for a moment. “No,” he said. “I do not recollect your making me a promise to that effect.”

“Do you recognise this letter?” Jayle asked him, producing the forgery that Jardigne had given him.

General Matthews read the letter, and a look of perplexity came over his face as he finished. “No, I do not,” he said.

Major James did not cross-examine General Matthews, but asked to see the letter. He read it through and handed it back to the President of the Court; but there was a look on his face which decided Jayle to call him also as a witness for the defence. Major James was therefore sworn as a witness.

“Do you recognise the handwriting of the letter you have just read?”

“Yes.”

“Whose handwriting is it?”

“Colonel Barlock’s.”

Jayle then called his third witness for the defence, Lieutenant Jardigne.

“How long have you known me?” Jayle asked.

“Two years, sir.”

“In that time, have you ever known me wittingly wage war against Her Majesty?”

"No, sir."

Colonel Jayle turned to the President of the Court and asked him to show the witness the letter he himself had produced and which General Matthews had denied having seen.

"Do you recognise this letter?"

"Yes, sir."

"State the circumstances under which it came into your possession."

"It was given to me by Colonel Barlock, who was temporarily in command of the brigade, and whom I had never seen. I knew nothing at the time of General Matthews' accident, and thought that Colonel Barlock was General Matthews. In fact, I had given him the letter you gave me, which was intended for General Matthews personally. The letter now produced in Court was ostensibly in reply to the one I had just given Colonel Barlock. This was on the evening of June 9th. On the morning of June 10th I rode to Sitoli with Colonel Barlock, whom I still mistook for General Matthews, and two or three Kolaris. I left Colonel Barlock at Sitoli and myself walked into the hills, following your tracks until I found you. I gave you the letter. You read it, and then threw it back to me, and I picked it up. We then both returned to Sitoli."

"Did I make any remark on the letter before giving it back to you?"

"Yes. You said that before I had come up you had decided to go to Barachina that morning."

"Did you inform me that General Matthews was at Sitoli?"

"Yes."

"What happened when we reached Sitoli?"

"You were arrested, apparently as a deserter. Colonel Barlock appeared very anxious to recover the letter that I had given you. After you had been placed under arrest, his son searched you for the letter; but he did not find it, as I had, in the meantime, given it to one of the Kolaris who had come with us. It did not again come into my possession until three days ago, when I gave it to you."

"You stated earlier in your evidence that you and Colonel Barlock rode together to Sitoli on the morning of June 10th, with two or three Kolaris. Did any men of Colonel Barlock's regiment accompany you?"

"No, sir."

Major James rose to cross-examine Jardigne.

"You state that during the two years you have known Colonel Jayle you have never known him wittingly wage war against Her Majesty. Have you ever heard of any instance of Colonel Jayle waging war against Her Majesty before you met him?"

"No, sir."

"You state that when you gave the letter which Colonel Jayle had given you to Colonel Barlock, you mistook him for General Matthews. Could you not recognise him by his badges of rank?"

"No, sir. It was dark, and I had no reason to suspect that it was otherwise than General Matthews. I met you yourself when I arrived at

Barachina, and said I wished to see the General. You took me to Colonel Barlock."

"You state that when the letter which you received from Colonel Barlock again came into your possession, you handed it to Colonel Jayle. Why did you do that?"

"The letter was addressed to Colonel Jayle."

"Did you read the letter?"

"Yes, sir. I read it with Colonel Jayle's permission before he returned to Sitoli."

"As you were aware that Colonel Jayle was under arrest, and that this letter had a direct bearing on the case, do you not think that it was your duty to send the letter officially to the Brigadier?"

"No, sir. I was under the impression that a letter is the property of the person to whom it was addressed."

"Do you realise that by doing this you made yourself responsible for concealing material evidence if Colonel Jayle did not choose to produce the letter?"

"Yes, sir. I was willing to take the responsibility. Colonel Jayle informed me that he did intend to produce the letter."

"Did Colonel Jayle ask you for the letter?"

"Yes, sir."

Jardigne left the Court, and Jayle rose to make his own defence, which he gave on oath as a witness.

"With regard to the first charge," he said, "the only evidence produced by the prosecution to prove that I made war against Her Majesty is a

sentence in a private letter of my own, into which had been read an interpretation which it was not intended to convey, and which the plain English of the sentence does not convey. Even if I had, in a private letter, acknowledged that I had waged war against Her Majesty, this would not be admissible as evidence of the fact. It might possibly be taken as corroborative evidence, if sworn first-hand evidence had been produced ; but my own statement in a private letter is not admissible, unsupported by sworn evidence, as evidence to prove a fact. The Court has only to consider evidence given on oath. When I wrote that letter I was not on oath. Therefore, the Court cannot consider anything written in that letter, either with reference to the charge of waging war against Her Majesty, or with reference to the charge of desertion.

“ But there is no statement in that letter that can by any stretch of imagination be taken as an acknowledgment that I have at any time waged war against Her Majesty. The only statement that has been misconstrued into such an admission is the statement that during a part of my life I have lived the life of an adventurer. That statement is perfectly true. During part of my life I have lived as an adventurer in Kolaristan. But, so far from waging war against Her Majesty, or Her Majesty's subjects, I used my influence to prevent Kolari raids against British territory. The success I met with is apparent from the fact that, as I rose to a position of influence in Kolaristan these raids diminished, and finally ceased altogether.

In fact, I was selected to raise the regiment with the express object of preventing these raids.

"The one occasion when I have waged war against Her Majesty was on June 9th. This was done unwittingly ; in fact, on this occasion, if anyone could be considered guilty at all, Colonel Barlock and General Matthews are equally guilty with myself.

"With regard to the charge of desertion, the only evidence other than that of the stolen letter of mine, which I have already shown to be inadmissible as evidence, is that I did not return with the detachment from Sitoli to Barachina on the night of June 9th. But the evidence also proves that I did intend to return to Barachina the next morning.

"Besides the sworn evidence of Lieutenant Jardigne, it is inconceivable that I should have come with Lieutenant Jardigne to Sitoli if I had not intended to return with him to Barachina ; more especially as Lieutenant Jardigne had told me that General Matthews was there.

"My reasons for not returning to Barachina with the detachment are given in the letter which Colonel Barlock intercepted. When the mutiny broke out at Barachina, I was rescued, or rather kidnapped, by the Kolaris. Over that episode I could have had no control. I did my best to prevent the mutiny, but failed. After the mutiny of the Purbiah wing of the regiment I kept the Kolari wing together as an organised unit. It was my intention to carry out with the Kolari wing the object for which the regiment was originally

raised, namely, the prevention of Kolari raiding. I and the two British officers with me could not do this except by guile ; but we succeeded.

" If I had returned to Barachina with Lieutenant Jardigne on the evening of June 9th, all our efforts would have been wasted. What we had done had been done indirectly, without the knowledge and consent of the Kolaris. My departure from Kolaristan at the time would have meant that the Kolaris would have reverted to their former state of professional dacoity. At that time I was the only person capable of carrying on the work I had begun. I had cheated the leading Kolari of the district, Niaz Mahomed, into maintaining law and order in his own district, and discouraging raiding outside. Niaz Mahomed himself had not the least idea that this was actually what he had been doing since the mutiny. A Kolari raider, Akbar Ali, played into my hands in the first place by raiding two villages at the mouth of the Barachina pass which Niaz Mahomed had, in the old days before the regiment was raised, considered his own particular preserve, and Niaz Mahomed seized both him and his loot.

" I had no opportunity of explaining to Niaz Mahomed my scheme of acting as police and preventing raids, or, in other words, continuing the work for which the regiment was raised, before this brigade came into Kolaristan. Nor was it necessary to do so as long as he continued to play into my hands.

" When, however, this brigade came to Kolaristan, it was necessary for me not only to explain

this to Niaz Mahomed, but also to get him to agree to it, before I could join the brigade. This I did on the evening of June 9th, after Lieutenant Jardigne had taken the detachment back from Sitoli to Barachina. If I had gone back with Niaz Mahomed with that detachment to Barachina, instead of first persuading Niaz Mahomed to complete the work I had begun since the mutiny, Kolaristan would have reverted to the state in which it was when the Kolari regiment was first raised. By delaying my return to Barachina for twelve hours I prevented this. And it is obvious that, in order to do this, I was perfectly justified in returning to Barachina on the morning of June 10th, instead of on the evening of June 9th.

“With regard to the details of my arrest at Sitoli, which have been adduced by the prosecution to prove that I resisted arrest, and so presumably that I had not intended to return to Barachina, I would invite the attention of the Court to two points: Firstly, Colonel Barlock’s method of obtaining my presence at Sitoli, both by intercepting and reading a private letter of mine, and by forging a reply; secondly, the fact that Colonel Barlock, whom I would have recognised, did not himself come forward to inform me that I was under arrest, though he was obviously present and within reasonable distance, but sent his son, an officer very much junior to me, and whom I had never seen before. These two facts clearly prove that Colonel Barlock’s action was vindictive, and that he deliberately laid a trap for me, into which I fell, in order to raise a spurious case against me.

"Colonel Barlock, in his evidence, states that he took two companies of his regiment into the hills with him in order to effect my arrest as a deserter. Lieutenant Jardigne, who accompanied Colonel Barlock, states that no men of Colonel Barlock's regiment accompanied them. Common sense will show which of these two statements is true. If two companies of Colonel Barlock's regiment accompanied them to Sitoli, Lieutenant Jardigne must have noticed it as unusual and mentioned the fact to me before we went to Sitoli, when he gave me the letter purporting to come from General Matthews. If Lieutenant Jardigne had told me that these companies were at Sitoli, I would have seen the trap laid for me and would have gone straight to Barachina, as was my original intention, without first going to Sitoli. It was only because Lieutenant Jardigne told me that General Matthews was at Sitoli and wished to accompany me back to Barachina that I went to Sitoli at all.

"It is clear that Colonel Barlock's action in this was both dishonourable and vindictive; and all the evidence goes to prove that, but for Colonel Barlock's action in dishonestly enticing me to Sitoli, I would have returned of my own accord to Barachina, when nothing could have been charged against me.

"Colonel Barlock in his evidence also states that he heard me promise General Matthews that I would join him at Barachina that day. This was said obviously in order to insinuate that I did not keep that promise. I have personally no recol-

lection of having made this promise at all. Neither, according to his evidence, has General Matthews any recollection of my doing so ; and he would be more likely to remember whether I had done so than Colonel Barlock.

"I trust I have proved to the satisfaction of the Court that Colonel Barlock's evidence is inaccurate in at least two points, and also that he is vindictive. For this reason the whole of his evidence is untrustworthy, and the only evidence that remains is that of Lieutenant Barlock. This, too, is equally untrustworthy ; but, as it has no direct bearing on the charges brought against me, it is irrelevant.

"The essence of the crime of desertion lies in the intention ; and I trust I have proved to the satisfaction of the Court that it was my intention to return to Barachina of my own accord, and that the only thing that prevented me doing so was the dishonourable trap prepared for me at Sitoli by Colonel Barlock."

James rose to cross-examine Jayle on his evidence.

"You state in your evidence that you were the only person capable of carrying out the work in Kolaristan that you had begun, and proceeded to amplify and explain that statement. Did you explain this to General Matthews on the morning of the 9th June ?"

"Yes."

"Did General Matthews approve of your suggestion that you should remain in Kolaristan to complete this work ?"

"Not entirely. General Matthews said that the

suggestion would be placed before the Commander-in-Chief, and, if he decided that my presence was necessary in Kolaristan, I could return. However, I would like to point out that this delay would have been fatal. By the time I returned the harm would have been done."

"Did you tell General Matthews that this was your opinion?"

"Not at the time. It was not my opinion at the time. I only arrived at the conclusion after more mature consideration at Sitoli. I, therefore, wrote the letter which Colonel Barlock intercepted, and in that letter I did tell General Matthews that this was my opinion."

Major James asked permission to recall Colonel Barlock, which was granted.

"You stated in your former evidence," said James, "that you took two companies of your regiment into the hills to arrest Colonel Jayle as a deserter. Did you actually move with those companies?"

"No," answered Colonel Barlock. "I was mounted and rode ahead with Lieutenant Jardigne. The companies followed some distance in the rear."

"Could Lieutenant Jardigne be aware that these companies were following you?"

"I cannot say definitely, but I doubt it."

"You also stated in your evidence that you heard Colonel Jayle promise General Matthews that he would join him at Barachina that day. Can you give Colonel Jayle's exact words?"

"To the best of my recollection, Colonel Jayle

said : ' I suggest that I and my Kolaris join your brigade. I will go forward to Barachina and tell the Kolaris there what has happened, meet you there and hand over the Purbiah prisoners to you. To-morrow you and your whole brigade, including the Kolari wing, can march down from Barachina to the plains again.' "

" Did Colonel Jayle say this when he left General Matthews just before his accident ? "

" No. He said it while we were still on the pass, before the Kolaris had surrendered. I was not present when Colonel Jayle left General Matthews just before his accident."

Colonel Jayle did not cross-examine, and Major James rose to state the case for the prosecution.

" With regard to the first charge, namely, that of waging war against Her Majesty, this charge is not with reference to the affair of June 9th. It is with reference to Colonel Jayle's position and actions prior to 1855. It is for the Court to decide in the first place whether Colonel Jayle's statement in his own letter is admissible as evidence ; and, in the second place, whether the statement, if admissible as evidence, is proof of having waged war against Her Majesty.

" With regard to the second charge, namely, that of desertion, as Colonel Jayle has rightly stated in his defence, the essence of the crime of desertion lies in the intention ; but it lies in the intention at the time the crime was committed, not the next day. Many a man has repented of a crime, but that has not altered the fact of the crime or the punishment. I would point out to the

Court that the essence of the crime of murder lies in the intention ; but the fact of a murderer afterwards repenting of his crime does not alter the nature of the crime itself, or save the murderer from the extreme penalty of the law.

“ If, in the opinion of the Court, the evidence goes to prove that the accused did intend, the day after he committed the crime of desertion, to return to his duty, that fact can in no way alter the finding of the Court as to whether the accused is guilty or not guilty of the crime of desertion. At the most it can be merely a mitigating circumstance.

“ The evidence of this intention to return is based entirely on that of the accused himself, and on that of Lieutenant Jardigne. Colonel Jayle has suggested that the evidence of Colonel Barlock is untrustworthy owing to his bias. But I would point out to the Court that the evidence of Lieutenant Jardigne is equally biassed. By this I do not in the least intend to suggest that the bias is intentional. But a careful consideration of the evidence, more especially that given under cross-examination, will, I think, prove to the Court that the bias exists.

“ Colonel Jayle’s claim that Colonel Barlock’s evidence is biassed is based on two apparent discrepancies in that witness’s evidence. The first is that, in his original statement, the witness said, or rather implied, that the companies of his regiment marched with him from Barachina to Sitoli. The witness’s exact words were : ‘ I took two companies of my regiment, etc.’ The circumstances actually were that Colonel Barlock gave the

necessary orders for those two companies to march from Barachina to Sitoli, but being mounted did not actually ride with them. This Colonel Barlock made clear when he was recalled, and the original wording of his evidence was a minor discrepancy, which one might easily make without any intention to prevaricate.

"The second so-called discrepancy is no discrepancy at all. Colonel Barlock stated that he heard Colonel Jayle promise General Matthews that he would meet him at Barachina. General Matthews states that Colonel Jayle did not make this promise when Colonel Jayle left him at the Ag before his accident. Colonel Barlock, when he was recalled, stated that his former evidence had reference to a different time and place.

"The circumstances of Colonel Jayle's arrest at Sitoli are quite irrelevant to the charge under which Colonel Jayle was arrested. Whether or not Colonel Barlock was in honour justified in making use of the method he did to effect Colonel Jayle's arrest is not a point on which the Court is required to arrive at a decision. The point on which the Court is required to arrive at a decision is, not whether the method of Colonel Jayle's arrest was justified, but whether or not Colonel Jayle is guilty of the crime for which he was arrested.

"It will be seen that Colonel Jayle has given two entirely different sets of reasons for his failure to return with the detachment from Sitoli. First, in his letter to General Matthews; second, in his evidence before this court-martial. To take the first, his reason given in the letter to General

Matthews is that he would be performing a more important duty by remaining in Kolaristan. I would point out that, if every officer left his duty, for which he did not consider himself particularly suited, and went off to perform another duty, for which he considered himself better suited, the Army would cease to exist; such a course is obviously unjustifiable. What duty any officer is called on to perform is decided by his superiors, not by himself. In this particular instance, moreover, Colonel Jayle did make the suggestion to his immediate superior, and General Matthews practically forbade him to carry it out.

“With regard to the reasons that Colonel Jayle has given in his evidence, namely, that it was necessary for him to explain the position to Niaz Mahomed before joining this brigade and leaving Kolaristan, and that he was justified in delaying his joining for twelve hours for this purpose, this reason might be considered to have some bearing on his desertion, if there were proof that, at the time this detachment left Sitoli, it was his intention to explain the position to Niaz Mahomed, and return to Barachina the next morning. But there is no proof that this was so. In fact, Lieutenant Jardigne’s evidence appears to prove that it was not so.

“Lieutenant Jardigne states that, when Colonel Jayle threw the letter back to him, he said that he had decided to return to Barachina in the morning. This appears to imply that that was not Colonel Jayle’s intention when Lieutenant Jardigne left him at Sitoli the afternoon before. In addition

to this, even if the statements in Colonel Jayle's letter to General Matthews are not admissible as evidence, the existence of the letter itself is admissible; and there is the natural presumption that, if he had intended then to explain the position to Niaz Mahomed and return to Barachina the next day, he would have said so, instead of giving General Matthews the impression that he did not intend to join his brigade at all. And, as I have already pointed out, Colonel Jayle's intentions when Lieutenant Jardigne left Sitoli with the detachment are what the Court have to base their finding on—not his intentions the next day."

On the conclusion of the speech of the prosecutor the President of the Court turned to Jayle and asked him if he had anything further to say, and on Jayle saying that he had not the Court was closed to consider its finding.

"There is no need for me to sum up," said the President. "The evidence is clear and straightforward."

The President then read out the first charge—waging war against Her Majesty the Queen—and asked each member in turn, commencing with the junior, whether in his opinion the accused was guilty or not guilty of the charge. Every member said, "Not guilty." The President then read out the second charge—desertion—and asked the opinion of each member as before. And the unanimous verdict was "Guilty."

The Court was reopened and the President informed Jayle of the verdict on both charges, and asked him whether he had anything to say with

reference to the second charge before the Court considered their sentence.

Jayle was a brave man, but he had been so certain of acquittal that the shock of condemnation made him change colour. He knew what the sentence must be, but he felt that he had done nothing to merit it.

"I have already said everything I wish to say," he said. "I have been found guilty of the crime of desertion. But I still maintain that to do what I did to save Kolaristan from a return to its former lawless state was more in the service of my Queen than to join her regular forces. I am, and always have been, an adventurer."

The Court was again closed to consider the sentence.

The junior member gave his vote as "*Death*, but recommended to mercy."

"A recommendation to mercy is a point that requires a separate vote to the sentence itself," said the President. "After the vote on the sentence has been taken the vote as to a recommendation to mercy will be taken."

The opinion of each member was taken, and the unanimous sentence was "*Death*."

"I will now take the vote as to a recommendation to mercy," said the President. "At the same time, I must point out that a recommendation to mercy must be accompanied by a statement of the grounds on which the recommendation is made."

"I am in favour of a recommendation to mercy," said the junior member, "on the grounds that but for the unnecessarily hasty action of Colonel

Barlock the accused would have effaced his crime by rejoining of his own accord."

Three members voted in favour of a recommendation to mercy on the same grounds. The other three voted against a recommendation to mercy. This left the deciding vote to the President.

"I am opposed to a recommendation to mercy," he said. "Indian sepoys who have deserted and have been recaptured are invariably sentenced to death; and in their cases the desertion is often in fact usually due either to ignorance or fear of their comrades. In any case, they have more excuse and claim to mercy than a British officer who deserts."

Colonel Jayle was again brought before the Court and informed of the sentence, and asked whether he had anything to say.

"I request that Lieutenant Jardigne may command the firing party," he replied.

The President looked surprised at the request; but all he said was, "Your request will be entered at the end of the proceedings, and orders on the point will be issued by General Matthews, by whom the finding and sentence must be confirmed. If the finding and sentence are confirmed, you will be shot at dawn to-morrow."

Jayle did not change colour this time. He withdrew with his escort, and the Court adjourned till the next day for the trial of Major Vaughan.

CHAPTER XX

COWARDICE

JARDIGNE came over to Vaughan's tent on the afternoon of the day of Jayle's court-martial, and found Vaughan engrossed in a letter which appeared to both amuse and enrage him.

"I told you about the letter I got from the Colonel accusing me of failing to carry our orders, and the letter I sent in reply," Vaughan said to Jardigne as he came into the tent. "Well, in reply to that I got a letter from Cunningham to the effect that the Commandant refused to forward my letter to General Matthews. So I forwarded it myself. Apparently Colonel Barlock has been ordered to give me, at any rate, particulars of the five occasions on which I am supposed to have failed to carry out orders, because here they are. But, for all the bearing they have on failing to carry out orders, he might just as well have sent me a list of the five books of the Pentateuch. Listen to what he gives as the five occasions on which I have failed to carry out orders, resulting on more than one occasion in the loss of Government animals in considerable quantities.

"(1) Your failure to reconnoitre the Barachina pass as ordered, resulting in the loss of camels.

"(2) Your failure to take adequate steps to

guard the camels in your charge, resulting in the loss of camels.

“(3) Your failure to allow Lieutenant Barlock to attempt to recover the camels, resulting in the loss of camels.

“(4) Your treatment of junior officers in general.

“(5) Your attempt to throw the blame for the loss of the camels on to a junior officer.”

And then he continued: “What have the last three anyhow got to do with obeying or disobeying orders?”

“Nothing,” Jardigne answered. “You ought to find no difficulty about proving yourself not guilty of that accusation. In fact, you could prove Colonel Barlock guilty of making a deliberately false accusation.”

“I could if I had the chance,” Vaughan said: “but this has no bearing on the court-martial to-morrow. I am only accused of cowardice and failure to carry out orders because I did not follow the camels up the pass Colonel Barlock says he ordered me to reconnoitre. Producing this letter would be barred as irrelevant.”

“It would prove that Colonel Barlock was vindictive.”

“That would be only an indirect defence. Colonel Barlock being vindictive would not necessarily prove that his evidence was not true. In fact, the evidence he will give of the facts will be perfectly true. No, the only defence that would be worth anything will be to prove that what I did was tactically correct.”

"But what is it all about?" Jardigne asked. He had not been told either by Vaughan or anybody else any of the details, but the other's remark about following the camels up the pass had reminded him of his argument with Jayle on the same subject. "Follow what camels up what pass?"

The Vaughan gave Jardigne the details, from his own point of view, of the episode the details of which, from Jayle's point of view, he already knew. And, rather to Vaughan's annoyance, Jardigne seemed amused. But before he could ask what there was in his description to amuse the other, further discussion was stopped by the entrance of an orderly with a letter for Jardigne; and Jardigne's white face as he read it showed Vaughan that something serious had happened.

"What's the matter?" Vaughan asked.

"Colonel Jayle has been found guilty of desertion," Jardigne gasped, "and he is to be shot at dawn to-morrow. And I am to command the firing party."

"But you can't. There must be some mistake. The General knows that you are a personal friend of Jayle's, and he would at once alter that if you asked him."

"Apparently Colonel Jayle himself asked that I should command the firing party."

Vaughan was too surprised to answer for some time. "Why?" he asked at last.

"I don't know."

"You don't think that Colonel Jayle thinks that you will not do your duty, Jardigne, do you?"

"No," answered Jardigne, flaring up. "Colonel Jayle is not a man of that sort."

"I'm sorry," Vaughan answered quietly. The news had naturally set Jardigne's nerves all on edge. "I have never met Colonel Jayle. Anyhow, there is no use in our discussing what his reasons may be, as the best way will be for you to go and ask him yourself. But there is one other thing which I hope you will not mind my pointing out to you. Whatever Colonel Jayle's reasons for this request may be, are you certain that you are capable of doing it?"

Jardigne burst into tears, and Vaughan strode to the tent door and closed it, standing outside with his hands in his pockets looking at the sunset; the sun which, when it next rose, would look on the death of Jayle and the still greater strain on his young friend. He waited outside his tent for about five minutes, until he heard Jardigne call him. On entering he found the latter perfectly controlled, with a look of hope on his face.

"I have thought of a way out," Jardigne said at once.

"You go off and get yourself a stiff brandy and water," said Vaughan. "I'm sorry I haven't anything to offer you here. Then come back in an hour or two, and we can discuss your plan then."

"There is no time to be lost. I am quite all right now, really."

Jardigne's excited voice showed the other that he was not, but it seemed best to humour him.

"Well, what is your scheme?"

"I meant to suggest it to you before anyhow, but this drove it out of my head. You say that you were in charge of the camels which were stolen on the afternoon of the 8th. Well, Colonel Jayle was in command of the party of Kolaris that stole them. Not only that, but there *was* an ambush actually laid, and Colonel Jayle's object was to entice the people in charge of the camels into the ambush. Of course, he didn't know they were British troops. Only the day before we had driven a big party of mutineers out on to the plain, who had tried to force the pass, and we thought you were mutineers, in the same way as your people thought we were. But the point is, you must call Colonel Jayle as a witness in your court-martial to prove what would have happened if you had followed the camels up the pass. If he is an essential witness in your court-martial, he can't be shot at dawn to-morrow. Write the application now, and I will take it over myself at once to the General."

The opportunity of calling the man who was in command of the other side as a witness in his own court-martial was unique, more especially as he could prove that the ambush Vaughan had suspected was actually laid. But Vaughan would have done anything to ease Jardigne's mind, and so wrote out the application, in which he showed that Colonel Jayle's evidence was absolutely essential for his own defence; and Jardigne took the letter off in comparatively high spirits.

On the way to the General's tent he met James, who told him that the General had expected Jardigne to come over, but it was useless to ask him

to alter his decision. Jardigne showed James Vaughan's application and James read it and took it in to the General, returning almost at once to tell Jardigne that the General would see him. Jardigne found General Matthews pacing up and down his tent with Vaughan's letter in his hand.

"Does Colonel Jayle know anything about this?" General Matthews asked as Jardigne came into the tent.

"No, sir."

"Did Major Vaughan write this at your suggestion?"

"Yes, sir. I did not know until half an hour ago that the subject of Major Vaughan's court-martial was those camels. As soon as I knew that, I told Major Vaughan that Colonel Jayle himself was with the Kolaris who stole the camels."

"I'm not at all sure that Colonel Jayle will thank you for this. Nothing can alter the fact that Colonel Jayle has been found guilty of desertion and condemned to be shot. This letter can merely put off the execution of the sentence for twenty-four hours."

"But Colonel Jayle is not guilty of desertion, sir. It was a trap——"

"Lieutenant Jardigne," interrupted General Matthews, before Jardigne could say what he obviously intended to say, "did Major James tell you that I would not discuss this point with you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, please understand that I will not. I have gone through the proceedings of the court-

martial very carefully, and I cannot alter the finding or sentence. Both are perfectly just. I cannot imagine what Colonel Jayle's object was in making the request he did; but I know your own feelings, and that is why I must refuse to allow you to discuss this at all. It is in your own interest that I do this. If you do, you are certain to say something of which I shall be compelled to take official notice. So if you cannot avoid the subject, you must go. I will answer this letter. As far as I can see, you can give the necessary evidence yourself in Major Vaughan's case."

"I will not discuss Colonel Jayle's court-martial, sir; but I cannot give this evidence myself as I was not there."

"Then how do you know anything about the ambush?"

"I only know that it was Colonel Jayle's intention to lay the ambush with a view to getting muskets and ammunition, and that he was disappointed when on one walked into it. It was the ammunition he wanted, not the camels themselves in the least. We had discussed the idea some time before."

"Who was the leading Kolari in the ambush? He could give the necessary evidence."

"A man named Niaz Mahomed, sir, and he is not here."

"Where is he?"

"He stayed behind in Kolaristan, sir. He was with me on June 9th, fighting Akbar Ali's party, the day you came up through the pass. When I came in to Barachina first, he stayed with Colonel

Jayle. When Colonel Jayle came in he stayed out to keep the remnants of the Kolaris together, so that what Colonel Jayle had done since the mutiny would not be spoilt."

"I see," said General Matthews quickly. The conversation was again approaching too near the subject of Colonel Jayle's court-martial. "Well, I will give you an order postponing Colonel Jayle's execution, and another order which you will take to Colonel Jayle to give evidence at Major Vaughan's court-martial. If Colonel Jayle approves of your action in this, well and good. If not, he can make a dying declaration and also give the names of two Kolaris who can give the evidence he would otherwise give. That leaves the decision in his hands, and, whatever his decision is, you must come back here and tell me at once."

Jardigne took the two orders off to the tent where Jayle was confined, and told him what had happened.

"I don't mind giving the evidence myself in the least," said Jayle. "It probably means that the last thing I shall do alive will be to save another man's life. It shows we were both right after all. You were right in so far as to suppose that the man in charge of the camels would not walk into the ambush. I was right in so far as to suppose that he would be blamed for not doing so."

For a man condemned to be shot at dawn the next day Colonel Jayle appeared to be extraordinarily composed. Jardigne, too, had recovered his self-possession, and hardly realised yet that what he had done had merely postponed the fatal

hour. So Jayle did not notice the strain he had put on Jardigne by his unusual request.

"Why did you wish me to command the firing party?" Jardigne asked.

"You are the only friend I have," answered Jayle. "I hoped you would not mind doing this as a last wish of mine. Although I am going to be shot for desertion, and I have no complaint against the fairness of my court-martial, my desertion is not like other desertions, and I am not ashamed of what I did. That is why you find me in such cheerful spirits.

"I think half the punishment in being shot lies in the fact that the man ends his life feeling ashamed. I grant now that I did desert, but I do not feel the least shame for what I did. The reason I have asked that you should command this firing party is that you know me, and you are the only man in the brigade who will realise and understand that, though shot for desertion, which is usually synonymous with shameful conduct, I die unashamed. Any other man commanding the firing party would behave as if he thought I was, or ought to be, ashamed, and that would annoy me. But you know that I have no reason to be ashamed of what I have done.

"Also I have one other request which you will understand. I have faced death so often in my career with my eyes open that I wish, when I face death for the last time, to do so with my eyes open. That is why I asked that you should command the firing party: that I may not be blindfolded. Will you do this for me?"

"Yes," answered Jardigne. "But is it of no use to try and get the sentence rescinded? General Matthews knows that you fell into a trap."

"Not in the least," Jayle answered. "The trap was merely to catch me after I had deserted. It has no bearing on my desertion, as it was not until I had written and said that I intended to desert that the trap was thought of, and by then I had deserted. You must promise me not to attempt anything of the sort."

"Very well," answered Jardigne. "I promise. Now I must get back and tell General Matthews that you will give this evidence. He told me to come back at once."

Jardigne found General Matthews engrossed in papers.

"I am sorry to interrupt you, sir; Colonel Jayle is willing to give this evidence," Jardigne said, and he was turning to go when General Matthews stopped him.

"You are not interrupting me," he said. "I was just going through the papers with reference to Major Vaughan's case. I understand you have seen a good deal of him lately?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you think he is innocent?"

"Yes, sir. I am absolutely certain he is. When Colonel Jayle first suggested this ambush, I said at once that no one but an idiot would come blundering up an unknown defile after a few camels. Colonel Jayle said——"

"Colonel Jayle's evidence certainly puts rather a different aspect on the charge of cowardice

against Major Vaughan, but we cannot discuss him and what he said."

"I have promised Colonel Jayle not to attempt to alter the decision of the court-martial, sir," Jardigne said, rather stiffly.

"Colonel Jayle is a brave man and a gentleman," answered General Matthews after a pause. "A soldier on active service is always liable to meet his death, and he cannot always have the choosing of how he meets it. I know you are personally attached to Colonel Jayle and, if my private opinion as a man and a soldier is of any consolation to you, it is that Colonel Jayle has done nothing of which an officer and a gentleman need be ashamed. He is dying as much in the service of his Queen as any soldier would wish to do."

"May I tell Colonel Jayle that that is your opinion, sir?"

"You may—when he is before the firing party. Do you know why he made the request that you should command the firing party? Do not answer my question if you think Colonel Jayle would prefer you not to," he added at once, before Jardigne could reply.

"Yes, sir," answered Jardigne. "Colonel Jayle will not mind your knowing the reason. He wishes me to command the firing party because he thinks I am the only man in the brigade who can realise he has done nothing of which he should be ashamed. I shall be able to tell him, in that at least, he is mistaken. He also does not wish to be blindfolded."

"I understand. Now will you ask Major James to come in here?"

Jardigne saluted, and left General Matthews' tent with feelings almost amounting to elation. As James entered the tent General Matthews gave him the application from Vaughan that Jardigne had brought.

"You are doing prosecutor in this case to-morrow, aren't you? Well, Colonel Jayle's statement knocks the charge of cowardice on the head. It appears to prove that Major Vaughan is a better tactician than any of us, when taken in conjunction with the letter that Vaughan wrote on the very afternoon the camels were stolen, before he had met or heard of Colonel Jayle. There only remains the charge of failing to carry out the orders to reconnoitre the pass. Colonel Barlock himself seems vague about that. And if he did give the order, it was in direct contravention of my own orders to him not to get seriously engaged. And Vaughan was present when I gave those orders. Now, I don't see how anything but an acquittal can result."

"No, sir. Of course, as prosecutor, I am still bound to obtain an acquittal if Major Vaughan is innocent."

"Exactly. Now, if Major Vaughan is acquitted, it is obvious that he cannot return to duty with the 50th. It will be fair neither to him nor to Colonel Barlock. At the same time, we want a senior officer to command these Kolaris. So, if Major Vaughan is acquitted, you must tell him at once that he is to take command of these Kolaris,

and take them back to Barachina. I will report the whole thing to General Nicholson, and Vaughan will remain with the Kolari regiment, but as a regiment, not as a band of dacoits, at Barachina until he receives orders from him. Do you understand ? ”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ Well, that has got to be done directly he is acquitted. And as soon as you have told him bring him straight to me.”

“ Very good, sir.”

.

As General Matthews had predicted, Vaughan was acquitted the next day. His letter, written before he had ever met or heard of Colonel Jayle, giving his reasons for not going up the pass, combined with Jayle's evidence to prove what would have happened if he had done so, proved without a shadow of doubt that his action, or rather inaction, was tactically correct. What would have been the result if he had not been so fortunate as to obtain the Commander of the other side to give evidence as to the exact position from that point of view is immaterial. But the unique circumstance of being able to produce evidence from both sides was a lucky chance for Vaughan.

The evidence against him of failing to carry out an order to reconnoitre up the pass broke down, as each witness—and every officer in the regiment who heard the order given was called as a witness—gave entirely contradictory evidence when, in cross-examination, asked to state Colonel Bar-

lock's exact words. Colonel Barlock himself stated that, to the best of his recollection, his exact words were: "Reconnoitre as far up the pass as you can get, until you meet any considerable number of Kolaris, but do not get seriously engaged."

Lieutenant Barlock said his father's words were: "Reconnoitre up the pass with a view to operations to-morrow."

Cunningham said that the Colonel's orders were: "Reconnoitre up to the mouth of the pass, but don't go up it."

Smythe's version of the orders given was: "Reconnoitre up to the mouth of the pass, but don't get seriously engaged."

Johnstone said that he heard the Colonel say: "Keep your eyes open in any case, and if you see any Kolaris let me know." He did not remember hearing the Colonel say anything about the pass, but he was not paying particular attention.

Vaughan himself, in giving evidence on oath, said that the only definite orders that the Colonel had given him were: (1) to graze the camels; and (2) not to get seriously involved. The Colonel had certainly suggested a reconnaissance up the pass, but had left it to Vaughan himself to decide whether this was feasible or not, keeping in mind his definite orders not to get involved, and the equally definite orders to the same effect that he had heard General Matthews give. Vaughan had decided, rightly or wrongly, that reconnaissance beyond the mouth of the pass was not feasible with the men he had, and this was borne out by Colonel Jayle's evidence. But he had certainly received

no definite orders to make a reconnaissance anywhere.

The finding of acquittal was read in open Court, and James at once gave Vaughan the General's message and took him off to General Matthews' tent.

"I am glad to see you have been acquitted of the charges against you, Major Vaughan," General Matthews said, when the two entered his tent. "It is, of course, out of the question for you to return to the 50th. You will, therefore, take command of these Kolaris. The Kolaris will march back to Barachina, where they will remain until you receive orders from General Nicholson, to whom I will report all that has happened. Lieutenant Jardigne will accompany you to Dujana, six miles from here, where you will halt for to-night. But Lieutenant Jardigne must return here this evening. You will remain at Dujana until Lieutenant Jardigne rejoins you to-morrow morning, when you will march to Barachina, but as a regiment, not as a band of dacoits. Is that clear?"

"Yes, sir."

Vaughan went off and told Jardigne the news, and the Kolaris started on their march back to their beloved Kolaristan with Vaughan and Jardigne early the same afternoon. The move was so welcome and unexpected that Jardigne was the only one who noticed and felt the absence of Jayle.

CHAPTER XXI

NEMESIS

THE solemn march of the firing party, with Jayle between the leading files, in the eerie light of the crow's dawn, had been too much for Jardigne's nerves. While Jayle stood on the edge of the grave facing the firing party, Jardigne staggered up to him, his face as white as a sheet.

"General Matthews told me I might tell you, sir," he said in a voice hardly above a whisper, "that, in his opinion, you had done nothing of which an officer and a gentleman need be ashamed, and that you are dying as much in the service of the Queen as any soldier would wish to do."

Jardigne was still hardly more than a boy, and Jayle saw that his whim had put too great a strain on his best friend's nerves. He held out his hand in the hope that his grip might recover the other sufficiently to enable him to do his duty. Jardigne took the hand and held it listlessly.

"General Matthews is a gentleman and a fine soldier. Will you thank him for his opinion when you see him, and tell him that I die unashamed. It is but the fortune of war. Now do your duty."

The hand Jayle released dropped nervelessly to the other's side, as Jardigne staggered back a pace or two. But do his duty he could not, and Jayle

saw that if the strain was continued another minute the boy would faint. He turned and faced the firing party. There was nothing for it but to give the words of command himself.

"Ready!"

"Present!"

His voice was as steady as it had ever been on parade. As the muskets came to the present, he looked at them quietly, with a slight smile on his lips. There was a pause.

"Fire!"

His eyes never closed. The steady gaze at the muzzles changed to the glassy stare of death, the knees slowly gave way, and the body of the old adventurer fell forward into the grave ready dug to receive it.

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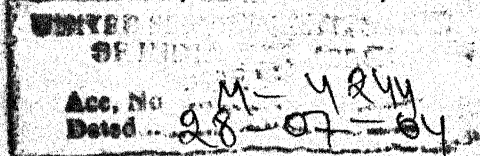
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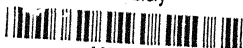
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